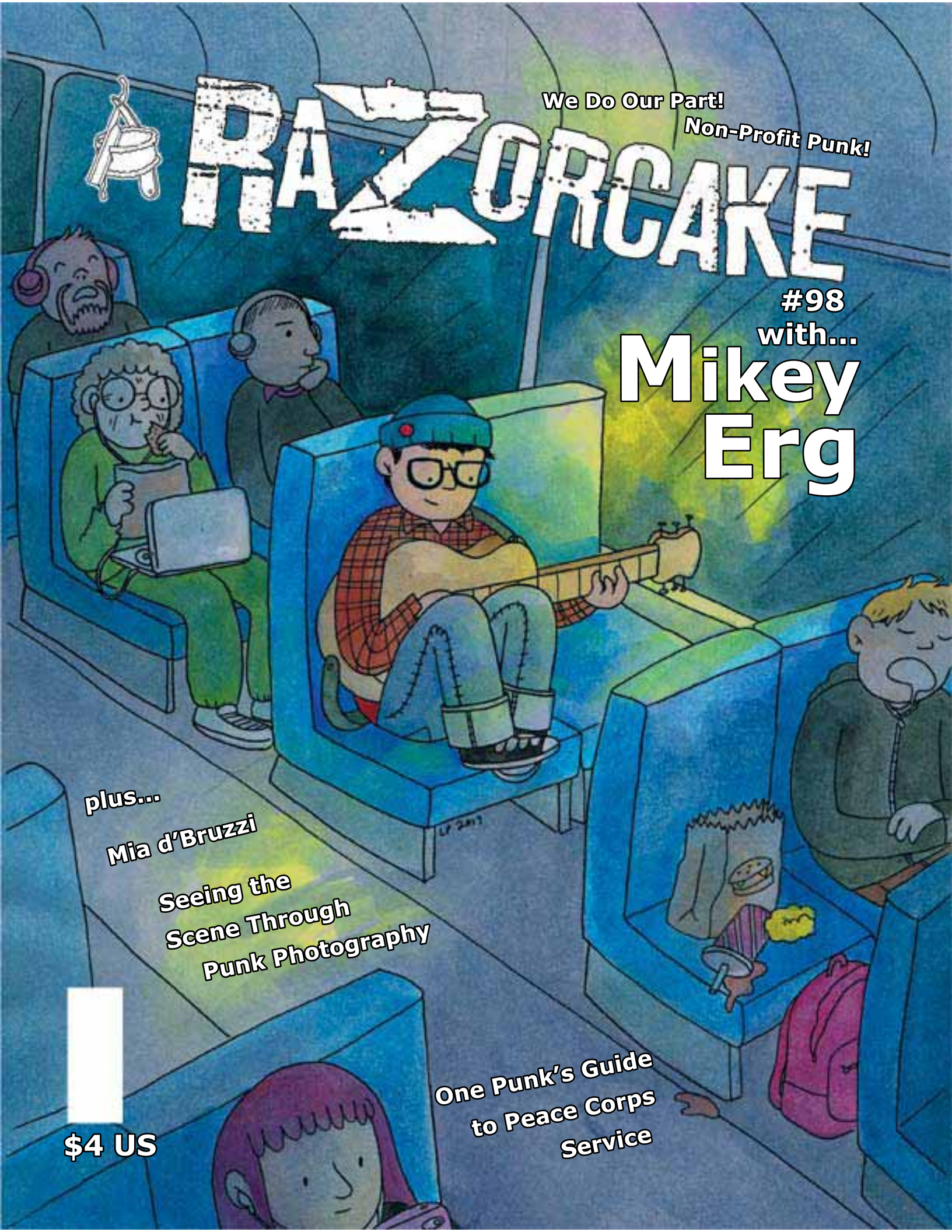
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Thanks, hope to hear from you soon. If you have any questions our email is: razorcake@razorcake.org

Live to Read, Read to Live

The day after Trump was elected, I turned the radio on to my local NPR affiliate as I made breakfast. The station aired a piece about truffles on that morning of the Hindenburg of American politics. An enterprising restaurateur gushed the fungus made the best eighty-five dollar hamburger you'd ever taste. Disgusted by the bougey, status-rubbing classism—talking about an artisanal menu when the world had just been set on fire—I not only turned off the radio, I changed my fundamental daily habits.

As any more-than-casual reader of *Razorcake* knows, we run full-length interviews and articles instead of "band spotlights." This is intentional and risky. Why? Because most people—punks included—don't read very much. Because nuance and context take time and concentration. Because the lifelong work of artists (like Mikey Erg and Mia d'Bruzzi) shouldn't be reduced merely to click bait. *Razorcake* is actively and conscientiously edited for content and ideas. We shepherd a novel's worth of words every two months. As an editor from day one, I've read every sentence (most multiple times) of our ninety-eight issues since 2001: 10,976 pages.

Some find a lot that's unpleasant in Razorcake. We're controversial and our content isn't sanitized for children. This is true.

When I was preparing to interview Chicken of Dead To Me for a podcast, I came up with a concept called "middle p." Big P is "Politics"—ways of governance, as in direct activism and national politics. Little p is the personal-as-politics: individual life decisions. Middle p is adding poetry to politics—creating songs, zines—a day-to-day interaction with the broader world; living smaller, directly engaged lives while also doing things like self-care to balance it all out and not go crazy. Which ever path you choose—from public protest, to peaceful resistance, to willful existence—have the self-confidence to not attack potential allies because they're not following your exact course.

As an avid, life-long reader of books, I find comfort in words that have meaning and novels with long ideas. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* has been instructive in decoding Trump's regime. During the book, a constant stream of bombers flies overhead. Not a single character knows much about the military buildup. Firemen—not firefighters—in the novel *start* fires, rather than put them out. All books are outlawed and the firemen's job is to not only burn all books, but all of the book owner's possessions as punishment for keeping contraband. The firemen burn books in the name of public happiness. These institutionalized burnings happen without protest from larger society. New media flourishes. Short attention spans, the quickening pace of modern life, and illiteracy are the fuel for society's complicity. Gone is the controversial and complex content found in books. In its place is a simplistic, lulling deluge of abbreviated words and images.

I'm constantly asking myself, "What's getting shoved aside?" "What's getting overlooked?" "How many filters did this go through before it got to me?" At what price do we pay for all of this abbreviation, all of this blurring, constant speed? The "new normal" is really the "new dominant." And you don't have to believe in it for a second.

Go deep. Read a long piece all the way through—critically. Embrace what and who you love because you probably can't change Trump, but you can definitely change yourself.

–Todd Taylor

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"You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them."
–Ray Bradbury

Lena Cisneros, four years old, and her dog Pluto, sporting her favorite hand-me-down from her Tia Yvonne. Chicago, IL.

Photo by Monica Cisneros.

THANK YOU: ***Buses as a romance language thanks to Liz Prince and Nation of Amanda for the Mikey Erg line work and coloring on the cover; Watch* Reel Bad Arabs *to find Arab characters who aren't depicted as terrorists in caves or ignorant perverts thanks to Bone Dust for Donna's illo.; "Yeti with brick cell phone action figures, please," thanks to Bill Pinkel for Jim's illo.; Yay! MariNaomi's debut of Asian Goth Punks Rule the World!; Rodney Dangerfield-esque orgy of teen pyromania thanks to Alex Barrett for Nørb's illo.; Chuck Berry was really made of guitars and amplifiers thanks to Jessee Zeroxed for Dale's illo.; Radiating heart thanks to Alex Romeo for her illo. in Puro Pinche Poetry; "Do you wanna buy insurance?" NO I DON'T WANNA DO DAT! thanks to Becky Rodriquez for her Chicken illo.; Copiers are the number one source of workplace rage thanks to Simon for her Bianca illo.; Never concerned with musical correctness thanks to David Ensminger, Bobby Castro, Claude Shade, Barry Barbour Duncan, and Dylan Davis for the Mia d'Bruzzi interview, photos, and layout; Congratulations to Christopher Gordon for his Chris Pepus Award-winning One Punk's Guide to Peace Corps Service and thanks to Eric Baskauskas for the layout; Chicken nuggets no longer a regular dining favorite thanks to Mike Faloon, Brett Essler, Marc Gartner, Madeline Bridenbaugh, and Lauren Measure for the Mikey Erg interview, photos, transcription, and layout; Read the practical advice to not getting knocked the fuck out when taking pictures at punk shows thanks to Daniel Makagon, Chris Boarts Larson, Patrick Houdek, Martin Sorrondeguy, Dawn Wirth, and Becky Bennett for the Seeing the Scene through Punk Photography interview, photos, and layout.***

"A hardcore haiku: Blood flows from my ears / Anguish, darkness, blinding rage / Blink and it's over." –Sean Arenas, Hummingbird Of Death / Beartrap: Split: 5" ***Thanks to 98's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Cheyenne Neckmonster, Jon Mule, Michelle Kirk, Rich Cocksedge, Jimmy Alvarado, Sean Arenas, Ian Wise, Billups Allen, Indiana Laub, Tim Brooks, Keith Rosson, Kayla Greet, Kurt Morris, Matt Werts, Camylle Reynolds, Simone Carter, Sean Koepenick, Michael T. Fournier, Ty Stranglehold, Juan Espinosa, Sal Lucci, Mark Twistworthy, Lyle, Vincent, Candace Hansen, Bryan Static, Garrett Barnwell, Art Ettinger, Chad Williams, Matt Seward, Ryan Nichols, Chris Terry, Nørb, Mike Frame, Cynthia Pinedo, Theresa W., Jim Woster, Adrian Salas, Matthew Hart, Tricia Ramos, Craven Rock, and Rosie Gonce.***

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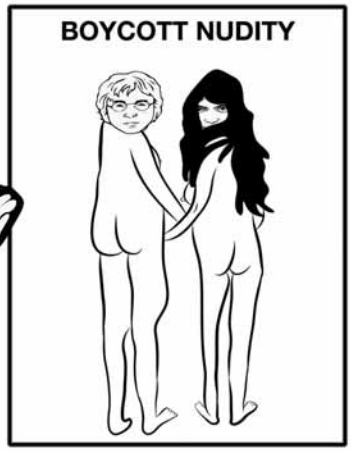

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Don Rickles.

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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is.
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Never seeing yourself represented anywhere leaves a mix of feelings.

A World of Windows, No Mirrors

Remember the first time you read *Catcher in the Rye*? Every rebellious teenager falls in love with this high school required reading. The main character, Holden Caulfield, is so lost, hurt, lonely. He just wants love and purpose. The pressures of the future, letting people down, losing your innocence, and growing up are agonizing. Nothing could be more relatable to anyone nearing the end of adolescence.

Except it isn't. I will never know what going to private school is like. I'll never know what failing all my classes results in. I'll never know what dating is like as an adolescent. Hell, I was never unsupervised for more than an hour until after high school and never went out alone at night until my twenties. Holden never wrestles with the same issues of identity I still struggle with. To many of us, Holden isn't "us," he's "everyone else." One of those people you regularly encounter growing up in America. Like every book, movie, TV show, or any other medium, I enjoyed a story about someone else. Imagine what that's like, never seeing yourself.

There was no Donna anywhere, dealing with the ups and downs of being Donna. And I mean "Donna," I don't mean Muslims or Arabs. I may not have personally been represented at all, but Arabs were definitely depicted. But it wasn't my reflection. It was a racist, funhouse mirror. I still get an awful gut feeling when I'm watching something and any Middle Eastern character is introduced. Try and think of a time when an Arab was in a movie and it looked like me: a normal, American person. No accent, no guns, no "I don't understand your crazy American customs." Don't worry, I'll wait.

Now think of all the Arabs you have seen. Arabs are the men in the car who kill Doc Brown in *Back to the Future*, the stupid swordsman in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the murdering terrorist group in *True Lies*, *Rules of Engagement, Jewel of the Nile*, or six thousand other action movies. Of course there's every military movie from the past twenty years. Shows like *Homeland* and *24* have entire seasons of Arab villains, or shows like *Tyrant*, *LOST*, or *X-Files* insist every Arab character has a moment in their lives when they are faced with the internal conflict of whether or not to become a suicide bomber. What's really sad is how easily I came up with this list in under three minutes off the top of my fucking head.

You know what I'm talking about. You've seen these characters. Imagine the upset to discover the most "realistic" portrayal of you to date was a goddamn Disney princess. Now imagine people referring to you as "Princess Jasmine" for the rest of your life (and that's coming from the nice ones). The closest thing to a positive stereotype of Arabs is "The Sheik." A romance caricature, famously portrayed by Rudolph Valentino in (surprise) *The Sheik* in 1921, is generally characterized as a desert Fabio in robes; kidnapping women and holding them captive until they fall in love. But just like with Jesus, these trashy movies and painted novel covers have always made him white. Not to spoil it, but the end of the Valentino movie has the shocking reveal that he's adopted and not an Arab, then the female lead *really* falls for him. And don't even get me started on how Hollywood somehow made the Adhan (Muslim call for prayer) the scariest sound you could ever encounter. It's the opening sounds to the fucking *Exorcist*—you know, *the scariest movie of all time*.

Then there is my least favorite portrayal of all: brownface. As racist as blackface, but not as universally disgusting to democrats, brownface is used in comedy as a lampoon or in drama when they want a white actor to play brown. So in the few instances when someone brown is likeable, it's actually just Peter Sellers faking an accent with boot polish on his face, or John Rhys-Davies in a fez telling Indiana Jones "you go first" (who has since publicly said some terrible things about Muslims). Even the sketch comedy show *Key & Peele*, so commonly praised for their handling of racial and cultural issues, regularly played Arab characters that were either terrorists in caves or ignorant perverts.

Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies People by Jack Shaheen (a book and documentary I recommend) dissected Arab portrayal in American films. It chronicled one thousand films from 1896 to 2000 that included Arabs. Fifty-two had neutral depictions and twelve had positive depictions. *Twelve*. Out of a *thousand*. In the history of American filmmaking, Arabs are depicted as good people one percent of the time. I already knew Arab stereotyping was bad but even I'm shocked at how obscene that is. No wonder I could never find myself in media.

Here is a simple mind game. Imagine yourself in a Middle Eastern country you have never visited. What is the vision like in your head? Turbans, scimitars, sand everywhere? Sultry veils, camels, weird shoes with curled pointed toes? Burkahs, billowy pants, belts made of dynamite? War-torn, desolate landscape? Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves? Sinbad the Sailor? Aladdin? Having never been there, why do you assume this is what life is like there? Everything you've seen and heard through an American filter gave you that idea, right? For example, when I say "my grandpa" you might have envisioned him with a beard and long robes, living in a black tent with his forty wives in an empty desert, constantly walking his camel to an oasis. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Never seeing yourself represented anywhere leaves a mix of feelings. There's the idea you're so unique, your very presence produces awe. Then there's the more likely idea that you don't matter enough to be portrayed. In the end, you know you exist, but you're not a hundred percent sure. No one was going to make a coming-of-age tale of a first generation Arab girl who did really well in school, never really felt scared or lonely, and really just wanted the freedom to figure out life for herself. No one was going to make that because no one cared.

Though it never worked, I tried using stories of any brown characters as stand-ins. Latinx, Indian, Filipino—anything seemed closer to my truth than *Pretty in Pink*. British movies about Pakistani or Indian families were the closest thing I was able to find when I was a teenager. *Bend It Like Beckham* was the first time I saw a character sneak clothes out in a backpack and change once at school in an effort to simply dress how they wanted. It was so jarring to watch something relatable; I still remember that otherwise forgettable movie.

Even though I am well past the age where I feel like I need a coming-of-age tale to relate to, finally having positive depictions of people like me feels incredible. To read opinion pieces in newspapers written by people like me solidifies my existence. Simply seeing a

BONE DUST

In the end, you know you exist, but you're not a hundred percent sure.

woman in a hijab grocery shopping in the background of a sitcom places me in the same universe as what I'm watching. Abed Nadir in the television show *Community* is nothing like me, but at least he's obsessed with movies and not, say, oil money. This may sound dramatic, but reading *Ms. Marvel* and watching *Steven Universe* and seeing girls like Kamala Khan and Connie Maheswaran as main characters has changed my life. I regularly start crying when they find themselves at odds with their strict parents—having to constantly choose between lying and having personal freedoms—or whenever they are made fun of for not being like the others, or feel pressured by societal expectations. I cry because seeing myself reflected by fictional characters is incredibly overwhelming for someone who has never experienced it. I also cry because I'm overjoyed to see myself, normal as everyone else, broadcast to a world that never really got to see me before.

You may find yourself surprised when I describe my grandfather. He was an affluent international businessman. He was always clean-shaven, had a stately comb-over, and wore suits almost everyday. He had one wife, nine kids, and a big white house near the sea with a courtyard full of fruit trees and birds. He spoke at least three languages fluently and helped me with my English words when I was a baby. He loved fart jokes, Rothman cigarettes, and a cold beer. He had a smile that could part clouds and a laugh that never stopped. He died about a decade ago, incredibly proud of his American granddaughter. He always told me I was lucky to have so many opportunities afforded to me, thanks to his son's willingness to take a leap of faith and move to the States.

If this didn't fit your preconceptions, hopefully next time you'll be a little less surprised.

–Donna Ramone

Where did *Neon Maniacs* go wrong?

The Neon Ones, Part 2:
Enter the Maniacs

When *Neon Maniacs* was released in 1986, Michael Myers had already slashed his way through three *Halloween* flicks and Jason Voorhees was rampaging through his sixth installment of the *Friday the 13th* series. It was a golden age for slasher movies.

While *Neon Maniacs* shares several similarities with the slasher subgenre (tits, monsters, gore) it isn't a slasher flick. No one is really sure what *Neon Maniacs* is. Horror movie with a heart of gold? Sentimental supernatural story? A very confusing zombie movie?

I'm inclined to view *Neon Maniacs* as an unintentional '80s comedy. Whatever viewers take away from the experience, they are likely to leave with more questions than answers.

First, a sarcastic summary with spoilers galore: The film opens at the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco where the slithering fog and wailing of a ship's horn serve as an eerie backdrop to a night of creeptastic horror. When a lone fisherman gets too close to a strange door at the base of the bridge, a creature with an axe emerges and its curtains for the angler.

The thing with the axe is joined by other creatures. They are human shaped and armed with unusual weapons: crossbow, hangman's noose, samurai sword, et cetera. They are decked out in what can only be described as costumes. For instance, the guy with the samurai sword looks like a samurai warrior, albeit one with decomposing skin, i.e. he resembles a zombie from feudal Japan. These are the maniacs and the fun is just getting started.

From the bridge they move on to a park where Natalie, played by Leilani Sarelle, and six of her friends are hanging out, drinking beer, and up to no good. I'd introduce them but they don't last long. The maniacs descend on the park and murder the kids one by one. Natalie survives by locking herself in the van. They swarm the vehicle, but after a flash of lightning the killers disappear. However, not only have the maniacs vanished, so have their victims.

Natalie tells her story to the police, led by a cigar-smoking Detective Manello played by Bo Sabato who seems to be going for a poor man's Dennis Franz of *Hill Street Blues*. Without any bodies, the police don't believe Natalie's story and don't take her seriously. Natalie is fairly convincing in her grief but there are missteps. For instance, after getting home from the police station she goes for a dip in the pool. It's like she's asking to be murdered.

There are two people who believe Natalie. The first is Paula, a young monster movie enthusiast whose dusty attic bedroom is decorated with photo stills and latex masks from monster movies. She is an amateur moviemaker directing a vampire movie with her friends, one of whom is the son of a police officer who reports something strange went down at the park the previous evening. A bunch of kids have gone missing and the place is covered in green slime.

Paula is the movie's meddling kid. Not even Natalie takes her seriously. Paula goes to the park to investigate and follows a trail of slime back to the bridge where the entrance to the maniacs' lair is littered with dead pigeons, for reasons that are never explained. The police run her off but being the plucky, fearless monster enthusiast that she is, she comes back later that night to record the maniacs as they emerge from under the bridge for a night of killing.

I should add that these are some of the slowest moving monsters you've ever seen. (It's their incredibly sluggish pace that has invited comparisons to zombies.) When they're on the prowl, the score changes to a spooky, synth-driven loop of whirring sounds that repeat hypnotically until the maniacs attack. This theme is one of my favorite things about the movie.

After dispatching the cops, the maniacs are deterred from further destruction by a rainstorm. Paula makes an important discovery: these monsters disintegrate in water, like Gremlins in reverse. Hold on to that thought.

While the maniacs wait out the storm, we move to Natalie who is slowly starting to unravel, the symptoms of which involve dating Steve, a guy who goes to her school. Steve works as a grocery store delivery boy during the day and is the frontman of a pop rock band called The Outlaws at night. Steve serves as something of a protector for Natalie who is being besieged by the siblings and parents of her missing friends, who are understandably upset.

Whatever doubts Steve is harboring about his crazy new girlfriend disappear when they are attacked by a group of maniacs while riding the "subway." San Francisco doesn't have a subway system, but whatever.

Eventually Natalie, Steve, and Paula join forces, setting the stage for an epic climax during a battle of the bands between Steve's weenie rock band and the epically awesome hair metal band Jaded, whose lead singer takes the stage in a red sleeveless mesh shirt and a handcuff belt. This dude oozes more menace in ninety seconds than the maniacs do in ninety minutes.

Even though the maniacs are able to infiltrate the Halloween-themed party with ease, they are no match for a bunch of kids armed with squirt guns (seriously) and fire hoses (of course). In other words, this legitimately fearsome crew of freaky killers is bested by shenanigans that would not be out of place in an episode of Scooby Doo. The only difference being there's no grand reveal at the end. There's no reveal period. And that's a problem.

The remaining monsters retreat to their lair. The kids convince the cops to give chase and find out what strange hell awaits underneath the Golden Gate Bridge, but when they get there the maniacs have vamoosed. The monster's lair is nothing more than a storage facility filled with dusty junk. Detective Manello yells and sends everybody home. He goes inside for one last look. Seeing a strange light in a decrepit ambulance, he opens the door to investigate. There's a flash of light, the detective screams, and he vanishes inside the ambulance. That's right, *Neon Maniacs* ends the way *Repo Man* begins. Roll credits.

*

My cousin Mark grew up in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. As a child, he witnessed the building of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, which connects Bay Ridge with Staten Island. At the time of its construction, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world and remains a beautiful work of engineering.

Mark was fascinated with one of the bridge's supports, a massive pyramid-shaped structure one could easily imagine in another world, which is precisely what he did. In Mark's overactive imagination, the pyramid contained a portal to the gates of hell from which monsters sprang and the first seeds of *Neon Maniacs* were sown.

*

BILL PINKEL

The lead singer of the hair metal band oozes more menace in ninety seconds than the maniacs do in ninety minutes.

Neon Maniacs was originally written to be set in New York, not San Francisco, but was changed by the film's producers. This explains some, but not all, of the movie's eccentricities, such as the subway scene. It also accounts for the jokey tone of the banter between Steve and his goofy best friend who is more concerned with Steve getting laid than the maniacs who have wiped out six of his classmates.

Another change the producers made was more personal: in the original script my cousin wrote, Paula wasn't a girl but a boy—a thinly veiled version of Mark—the boy who loved monster movies more than anything else in the world.

In other words, my cousin's spooky story was seeded with autobiographical elements that were subsequently purged. This happens in Hollywood all the time. Once you sell your story, you no longer own it and the filmmakers are free to change any and all aspects of the story. One can't help but feel that if the story had hewed closer to its original vision, its original intent, it would be more successful.

Paula was played by Donna Locke who looks like she's twenty not twelve. Apparently the director thought so too, as she's frequently shown wearing a baseball cap for the USCSS Nostromo sideways, which makes her look like a member of the Lil' Rascals. *Neon Maniacs* was Donna Locke's first film and she never appeared in another movie.

Incidentally, *Alien* is not the only Ridley Scott movie Paula references: she also has a *Blade Runner* poster on her attic wall.

*

So what happened? Where did the Neon Maniacs (the monsters) come from? Where did *Neon Maniacs* (the movie) go wrong?

In the credits, each of the maniacs is given a specific name: Ape, Axe, Biker, Doc. In the trailer, they are introduced by name "in diabolical order." I have a memory—I don't know how reliable it is—of Mark showing me pages with sketches of the maniacs. He clearly saw them as characters.

For this reason I'm inclined to think of them as personas and not zombies. If you grew up reading comic books all your life, the idea of villains (and heroes) appearing out of the blue with names and identities isn't so odd.

But what made these maniacs "neon"? And where did they come from? While it's tempting to say the green slime is evidence that these monsters are mutants from Tromaville or some other radioactive suburb of San Francisco, I don't buy it.

Other than their slowness, the maniacs are fairly inconsistent. In some instances they display superhuman strength while at other times they are easily foiled. (Apache's arm pretty much falls off when Natalie shuts a bus window on it.) Some of the monsters are maniacal versions of people we see every day, like Biker, Doc, and Soldier, some have stepped out of the past, like Apache, Ape, and Samurai, and others were just plain freaky looking. They don't have supernatural powers but they are able to zero in on the survivors with freakish accuracy.

It's a story that cries out for a sequel that is also a prequel, a story that attempts to honor what my cousin intended and anticipate what he might want to see. Of course, my cousin is no longer with us.

So I'm writing it.

–Jim Ruland

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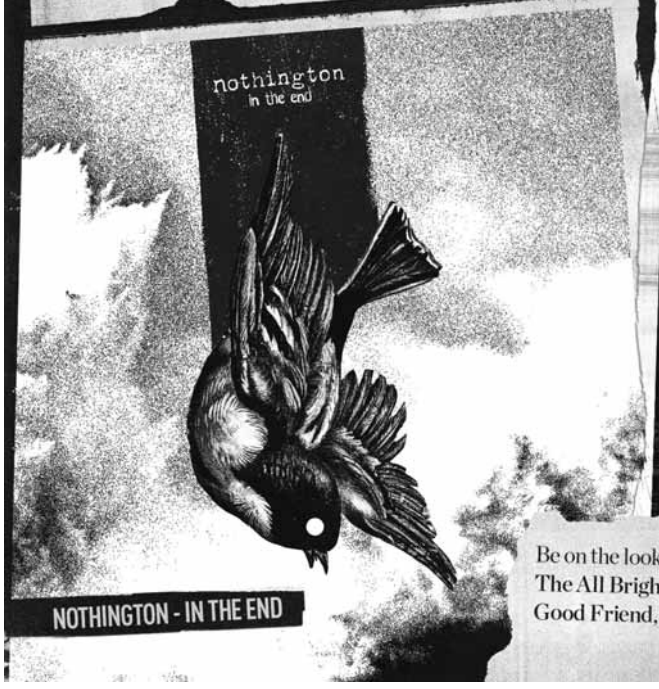

NOTHINGTON - IN THE END

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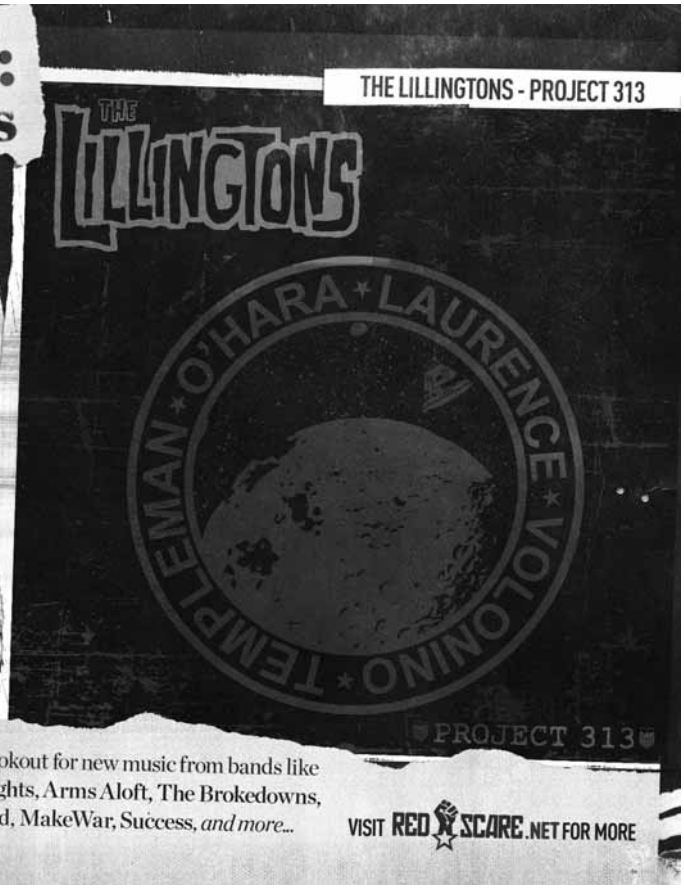

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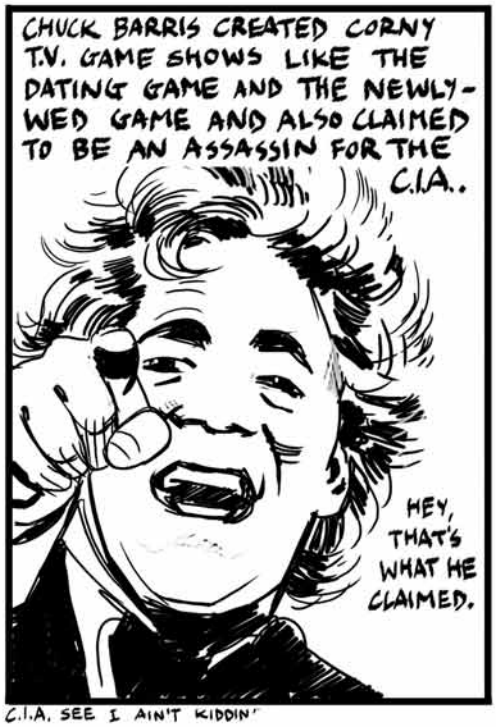
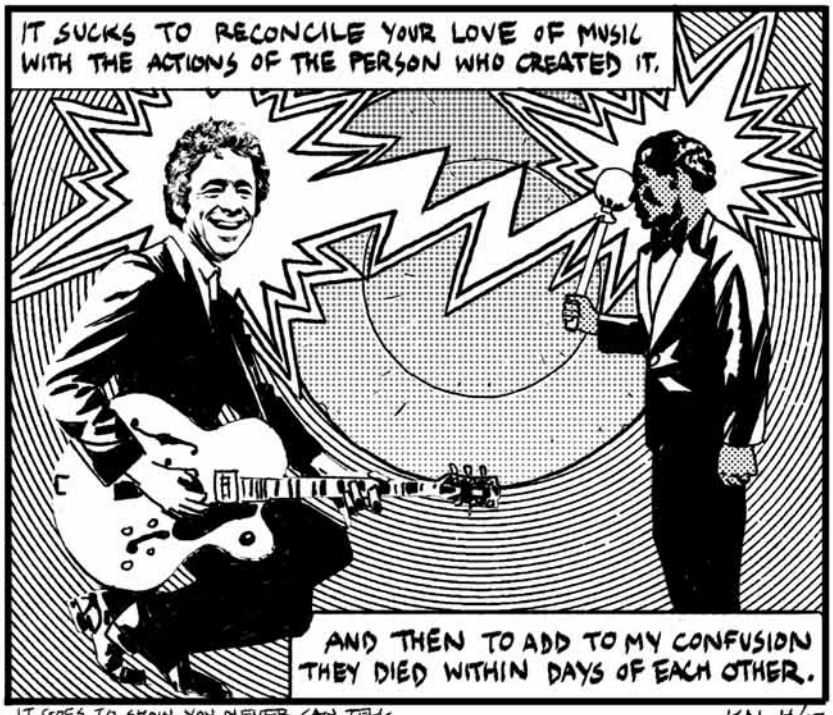
CHUCK BERRY!

C. BERRY WAS A ROCK N' ROLL PIONEER OF THE 50's WITH SUCH HITS AS JOHNNY B. GOODE AND MABELLENE.
I REMEMBER LIKING BOTH CHUCKS.
CHUCK BARRIS!

CHUCK BERRY IS SO VITAL TO THE HISTORY OF ROCK N' ROLL YOU'D WONDER IF ANY MUSIC TODAY WOULD BE THE SAME WITHOUT HIM. HE WAS ALSO A KNOWN SCUMBAG. HIS MUSICAL LEGACY IS MARRED BY SUCH ACTS AS TRANSPORTING A MINOR ACROSS STATE LINES AND WAS FOUND TO HAVE SECRETLY VIDEO TAPED WOMEN IN A BATHROOM/CHANGING ROOM OF HIS RESTAURANT.


CHUCK BARRIS CREATED CORNY T.V. GAME SHOWS LIKE THE DATING GAME AND THE NEWLYWED GAME AND ALSO CLAIMED TO BE AN ASSASSIN FOR THE C.I.A..
HEY, THAT'S WHAT HE CLAIMED.

C.I.A. SEE I AIN'T KIDDIN'


IT SUCKS TO RECONCILE YOUR LOVE OF MUSIC WITH THE ACTIONS OF THE PERSON WHO CREATED IT.
AND THEN TO ADD TO MY CONFUSION THEY DIED WITHIN DAYS OF EACH OTHER.

IT GOES TO SHOW YOU NEVER CAN TELL

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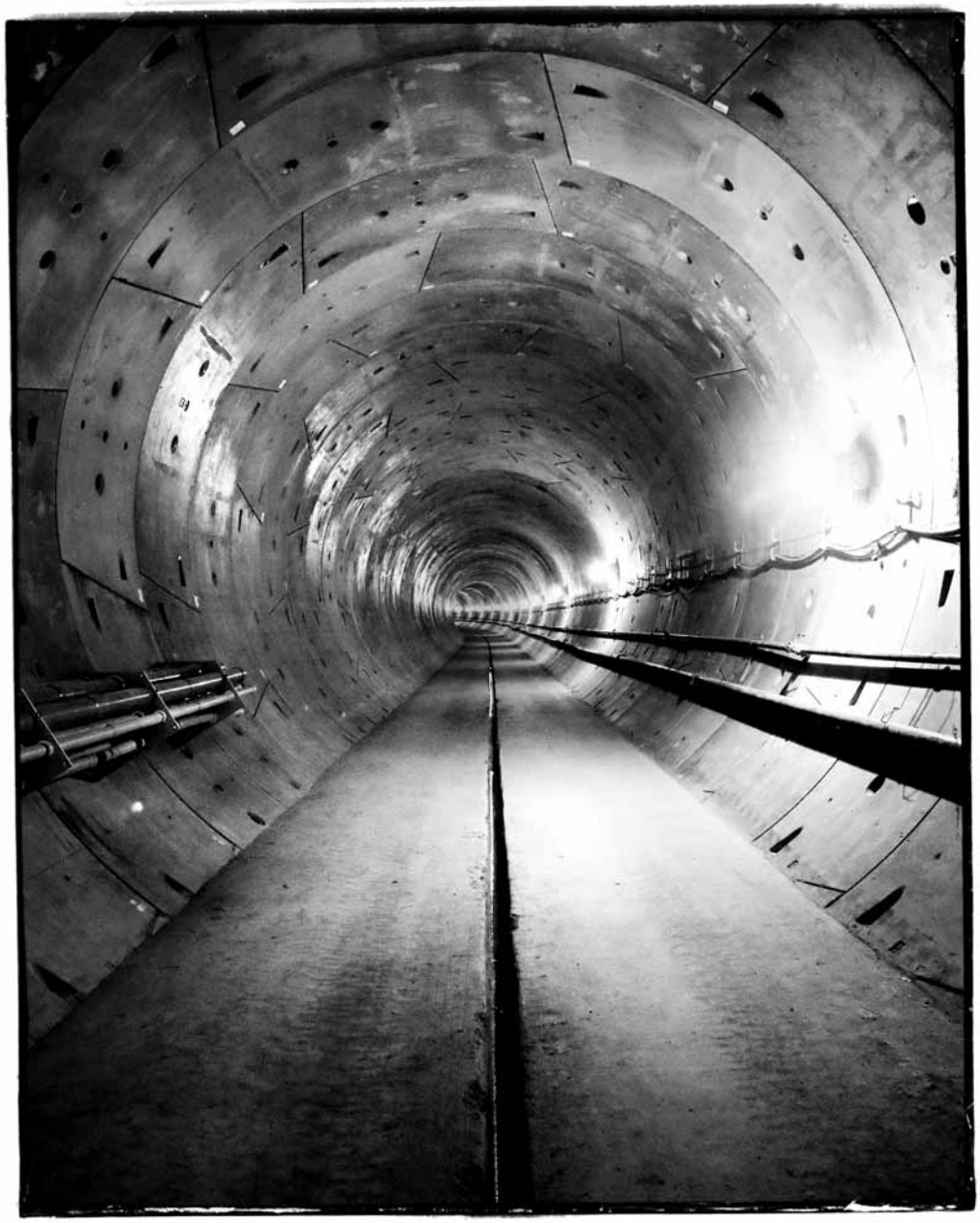

Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

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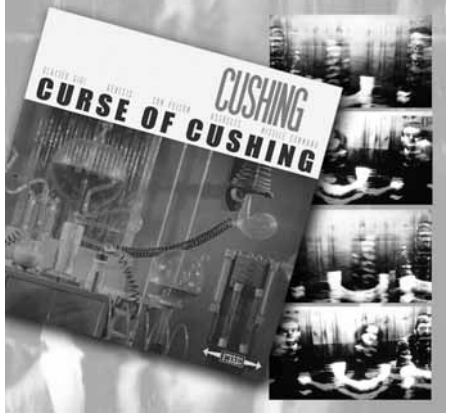

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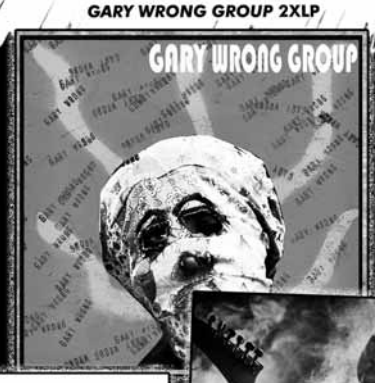

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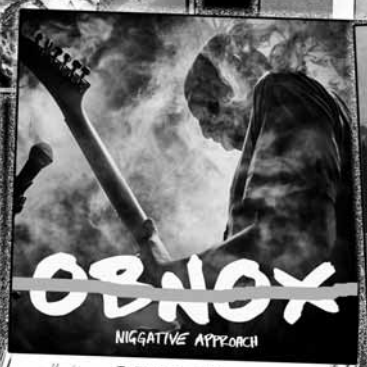

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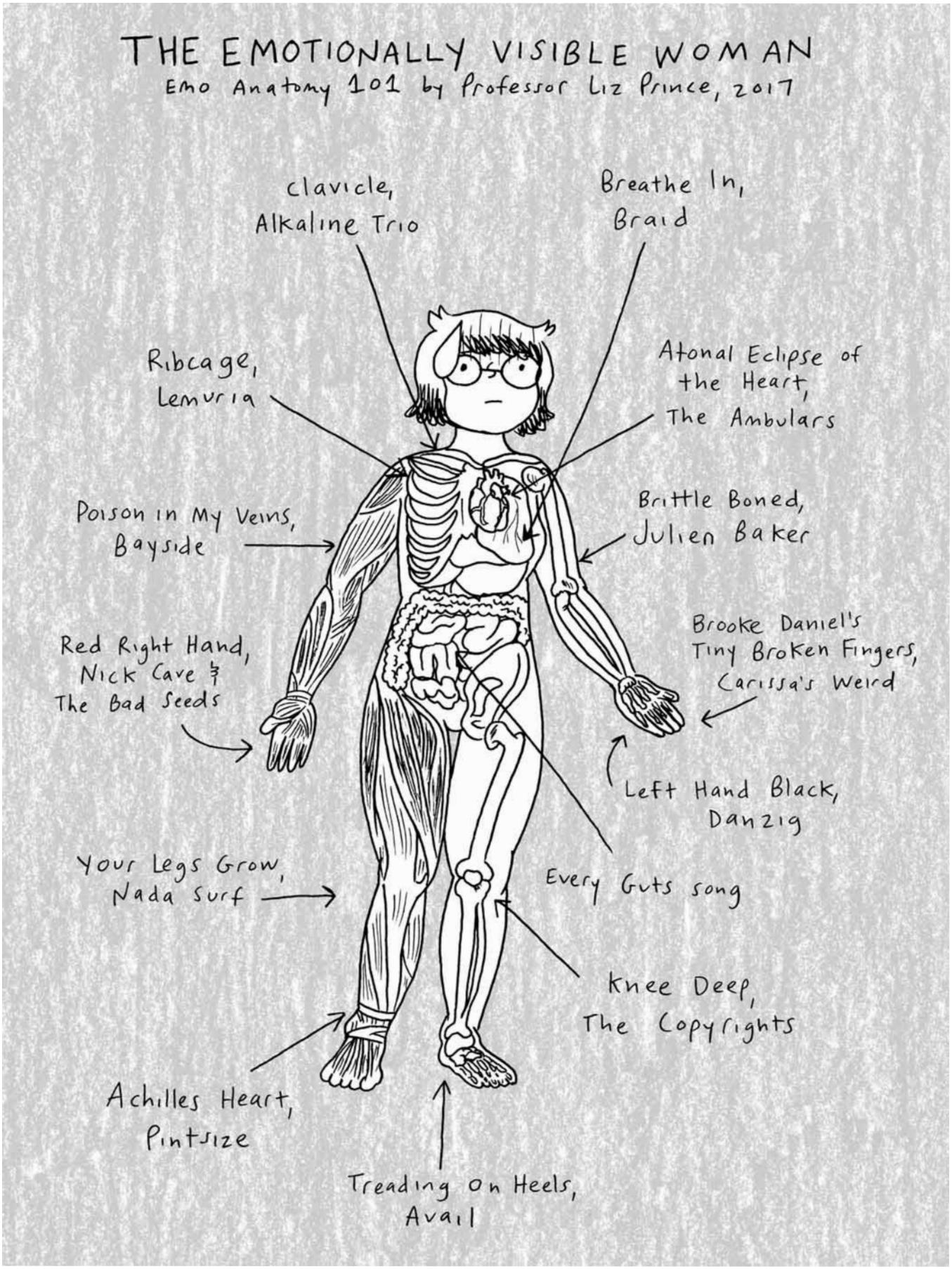
THE EMOTIONALLY VISIBLE WOMAN

Emo Anatomy 101 by Professor Liz Prince, 2017


clavicle, Alkaline Trio
Breathe In, Braid
Ribcage, Lemuria
Atonal Eclipse of the Heart, The Ambulars
Poison in My Veins, Bayside
Brittle Boned, Julien Baker
Red Right Hand, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds
Brooke Daniel's Tiny Broken Fingers, Carissa's Weird
Left Hand Black, Danzig
Your Legs Grow, Nada Surf
Every Guts song
Knee Deep, The Copyrights
Achilles Heart, Pintsize
Treading On Heels, Avail

Grand, Rube Goldberg-esque orgy of teen pyromania.

THE DAY MY BAND ALMOST BURNED THE HOUSE DOWN

Like many of my generation, I spent my teen years in a hardcore band. Like many of my generation, we perceived ourselves as fierce and feared destroyers of society, avatars of rebellion, witch doctors, and jungle-drum-beaters of global revolution. Like many of my generation, we also lived at home with our parents. So anyway, we were hanging out upstairs in our guitar player's bedroom one Saturday afternoon, waiting for his mom to leave so we could practice in the basement. Mrs. Farrell was reasonably indulgent with regards to the more prosaic of our teenage needs—she kept the family freezer stocked with frozen pizzas for us, the family cupboard stocked with chocolate fudge Pop-Tarts® for us, and, per my own oddball request, the family refrigerator stocked with sixteen-ounce glass returnable bottles of Tab® for us. Indulgent as Mrs. Farrell was in some matters, she was in no way a person with whom one would care to lock horns—she would brook no smart-mouth, backtalk, nor disobedience once she had given an order. Yes, she had given us the thumbs-up to practice in the basement; no, she didn't want any goddamn racket until she had left the house. So be it. Thus, we lolled around Gary's bedroom, bored and quiet, waiting for Mrs. Farrell to depart so we could get on with our sacred mission of refining our chops on such gems of '80s songsmithery as "Plastic Chicken" and "El Salvador Stomp." Suddenly, Gary perked up: "You guys wanna see my trick?" With little else to amuse us, Perry and I were game: "Sure, let's see your trick." Gary instructed us to initiate preparations for The Trick by cleaning off the top of his dresser whilst he fetched some mysterious object from his father's bedroom, so Perry and I dutifully began removing stacks of nicely folded socks off the top of his dresser, wondering if, perhaps, the trick was that Gary got us to clean the top of his dresser off for him. Gary shortly returned, bearing an object no less whimsical than his old man's can of Right Guard® deodorant. This was back in the day when aerosol deodorants were still a thing—one lifted one's arm and blasted one's pit with spray, not terribly unlike applying Aqua Net® hairspray or Krylon® spray paint (I think aerosol deodorants kinda got phased out because the fluorocarbons in the can were contributing to the breakdown of earth's ozone layer. I suppose the current administration will probably bring back aerosol deodorants, precisely because of that reason. THINK OF ALL OUR BEAUTIFUL OZONE LAYER DESTROYERS OUT OF WORK! SAD!) (actually, I just went online and found out aerosol deodorants are, amazingly, still a thing. Geez, that was quick). As Perry and I looked on skeptically, for his part, Gary retrieved his own Brut® solid anti-perspirant stick from his now-clean dresser, as well as a *verboten* cigarette lighter, no doubt cleverly secreted against detection from Mrs. F's watchful eyes. Gary removed the cap from his Brut® stick and set it down on top of the dresser. He then slid the cigarette lighter off to the side, and instructed Perry to ignite it, whilst keeping the lighter standing up in the precise spot designated. Thus, we now have a deodorant stick standing, proud and capless, in the middle of an empty dresser top, and a drummer holding a lit cigarette lighter at the far end of that dresser. Perry and I have yet to experience any manner of buy-in on the potential for awesomeness that this trick is alleged to contain; this whole setup seems like some ridiculously improvised pretext whereby Perry and I will just carry out a potentially infinite sequence of nonsensical actions to amuse Gary with the ramifications of our gullible participation. Gary, however, assures us that our patience will be rewarded; his trick will be indisputably awesome. "Hold it right there" Gary instructs Perry with regards to the flaming lighter, "don't move it." Gary begins to pace, eyeing up the lighter with exaggerated attention to detail, shaking his father's can of Right Guard®. "I need a drumroll," Gary commands. With our drummer otherwise occupied keeping the still-flaming lighter in its precisely designated spot, I take it upon myself to rap out a serviceable rat-a-tat on the side of the dresser. Gary purposefully lowers the aerosol can to flame level, and, wringing every last molecule of drama from the situation, he crouches behind it and pivots a few degrees left and right, like Willie Mosconi lining up the potentially winning shot in a high-stakes billiards game involving personal care products and butane. The tension and/or irritation builds to a veritable fever pitch; suddenly, Gary yells "NOW!", and delivers a huge blast of Right Guard® aerosol anti-perspirant/deodorant into the lighter's flame. The stream of manly, perfumed musk sails over Perry's long-suffering lighter flame, and FWOOF! instantly transforms into a huge, orange cloud of flame, like Gene Simmons belching on the Hindenburg. It looks kinda like what came out of the flame throwers the American troops shot into the caves on Guadalcanal, albeit on a rather smaller scale. The home-brewed flamethrower cloud hits the exposed Brut® solid, and, this grand, Rube Goldberg-esque orgy of teen pyromania climaxes with the deodorant stick itself bursting into a huge plume of bright blue flame. *Doctor, I think we've just successfully cloned Gary, Indiana!* As cool as the fiery Right Guard® cloud was, it's the flaming Brut® that really wowed us—I don't wanna perjure myself and say it burned as brightly as magnesium or anything ridiculous like that, but it sure the hell wasn't like the warming glow of a log burning in a cozy fireplace; it was pretty freaking bright. Sufficiently astounded, with the Brut® still flaming away, Perry and I broke into an appreciative round of applause. *Good trick!* Gary, taking a bow, triumphantly took hold of the flaming deodorant stick and held it aloft for one last look before blowing it out. We duly saluted its radiant majesty. Gary brought it to his lips and blew, like a child blowing out the candles on a birthday cake.

This is where things begin to go south in a hurry.

One surprisingly potent factor that the three of us, in our burgeoning teenage wisdom, had failed to take into account, was the effect of heat on the molecular composition of deodorant sticks. At room temperature, deodorant solids are a densely-packed cake of perfumed chemical sludge. As heat is applied—say, the type of heat produced when the deodorant is set alight by a cloud of flaming aerosol, while a bunch of bored teenagers stare googly-eyed at the ignited mass—the densely-packed cake of perfumed chemical sludge turns into a loose, wiggly lump of perfumed chemical glop, not unlike, we were to find, a fistful of runny, flaming Jello-O®. The burning Brut® does not wink out like a candle in the night as Gary blows on it. Instead—SHLUUUURPP!!!—the entire, flaming container worth of Brut® solid flops out of the plastic holder and onto the bedroom carpet, bursting into one united, flaming glob of manly and clean smelling jelly. We have, essentially, created DIY napalm, *and it is torching the bedroom floor.* For a second, the three of us are frozen

ALEX BARRETT

We have, essentially, created DIY napalm, *and it is torching the bedroom floor.*

in shock, staring at each other, our mouths comically agape. Perry, ever the Boy Scout, is first to react, stomping his dirty brown clodhopper down on the flaming blob. Under normal circumstances, stomping on the flaming incinerant would have been a wise, practical, effective course of action, quickly putting an end to the fire by cutting off the oxygen required for further combustion. Flaming deodorant lumps, we were to find, did not qualify as "normal circumstances." Far from being extinguished, the mini-inferno of twenty-four hour wetness protection responded to Perry's stomp by shooting out in a million different directions, flaming lumps of Brut®-slush flying EVERYWHERE. It was kinda like that scene at the beginning of that old show *The Wonderful World of Disney* where Tinkerbell waves her wand and the screen explodes in a shower of twinkles, except with pretty-smelling gobs of napalm sitting in for the twinkles. The flaming goop is everywhere: *On the floor. On the walls. On the stereo. ON THE BED. ON THE CEILING. ON THE CURTAINS.* A jillion little supernovas, flaming everywhere. What happened next can best be described as "a riot of activity," with Perry trying to extinguish the burning lumps on the carpet, me swatting the flaming globs on the sheets with a pillow, and Gary trying to frantically beat out the splatters threatening to ignite the curtains and walls. In all cases, we found our efforts to fatally squish out the burning goo a lot like playing *Asteroids*—every time we hit an asteroid, it split into a handful of smaller, but equally menacing, asteroids, our initial flaming singularity now going viral across the width and breadth of Gary's bedroom. As if roasting to death in a fiery torture chamber on a lazy Saturday afternoon wasn't bad enough, our situation was to become exponentially more dire: Without warning, Mrs. Farrell's unmistakable voice came slicing up from downstairs: "YOU KIDS KNOCK OFF THAT FIGHTING!!! YOU WANNA ROUGHHOUSE, GO OUTSIDE!!!" "Okay" chirped Gary, presumably quite unconvincingly. The nature of our endeavors, however, was not given to stealth and delicacy; and soon, Mrs. Farrell yelled again: "GODDAMMIT, I SAID KNOCK OFF THAT FIGHTING!!! DO I HAVE TO COME UP THERE???" In unison, the three of us yelled "NO!!!", any sense of panic which we had previously managed to keep at bay now erupting in full force.

Have you ever tried to put out a house fire quietly? It isn't as fun as it sounds. Picture, if you will, three teenagers trying to frantically and silently smother a room full of flaming asteroids. It's a complex and nerve-wracking process. Eventually—as far as we can tell—the lumps just burned themselves out. We had, despite the futility of our firefighting techniques, swatted the lumps into so many teeny-tiny sub-lumps, which burned so brightly and so quickly, that they basically exhausted themselves before they could start anything else alight. *Huzzah for the flame-retardant nature of modern fabrics!* There wasn't even a burn mark anywhere, or smoke—just the manly reek of Brut®, masking the scent of our unchecked teenage perspiration. Mrs. Farrell, of course, marched us downstairs, sat us at the kitchen table, and read us the riot act about wrestling in the house—a message to which we must have all seemed pretty suspiciously receptive.

The moral of the story? DEODORANT IS PUNK. *Use some today!*

Løve,
–Nørb

"Man, I ain't anyone, just a fan."

Rock in Peace, Chuck Berry

Rock and roll lost its reigning king this past March: Mr. Charles Edward Anderson "Chuck" Berry. Yes, he was indeed The King. No one else wrote music and lyrics—not to mention shape the things of future music to come—as he did. No one. Homeboy was ninety years old. Anyone who's talked music with me or even reads this magazine on the regular knows I've spoken fondly and in great detail of Berry for many moons, so I'm not going to get into his history here. There's a grip of stories for anyone to read up on Berry out there, including his self-titled autobiography that simply tells it like it was, warts and all.

I've always admired the way Berry approached his guitar-playing style, deeply rooted in the blues with his ten fingers just itching to let the new (at that time) sound fly. No wank, just that pure, unfiltered driving rhythm and wailing leads smacking you upside your head. Just as admirable was his lyrical prowess with setting a descriptive scene in the listener's ears for each song, not to mention creating some new words for the English language, like "botheration" and "motorvatin." Not a lot of musicians are capable of doing that. Hardly any. The man was born to usher in the new sound, and he did so to the *nines*.

As I've mentioned in the past, I'm in debt to my father and his record collection for turning me on to Chuck Berry at a very young age. Growing up, I heard a lot of big band, jazz, and rhythm and blues pouring outta my dad's speakers in his truck while we were driving to and from wherever, or out in the garage when he'd be dicking around in there, doing whatever. It made perfect sense then that he was also a big Berry fan when he was in his late teens, right when Berry got signed and was turned loose unto the world. How rad is that? Being that young and hearing some new artist tearing ass on a guitar in a way you've never heard before, but you're totally digging on it because of where they're coming from with it. The same way a lot of the soon-to-join first wave punkers in the late '70s had likely felt the first time bands like the Ramones or The Damned punched 'em between the eyes.

I only got to see Chuck Berry perform live once, back in the late '90s. Thankfully, it was with my father. Although it lacked the hellfire performance of his golden era I had come to know over the years from watching old filmed performances, it was still pretty cool to see him do his thing onstage and not miss a single vocal, as he would purposely improvise the arrangement of a good number of his vocals in the later years.

After hearing of his recent passing, I was a bit bummed, realizing I never got to meet the man, even though I heard through others who did that he wasn't particularly fond of white dudes (white women, however, he dug quite a bit). If you read up on his stories of touring around the states during the '50s, you can get an idea of why he wasn't too down with the honky contingent, and rightly so, but I digress, as I'm not one of those redneck racist fucks that he and other black artists had to deal with on the road.

No, my closest six degrees to meeting Chuck Berry happened in an entirely different way. Back in 1990, KLON (now KKJZ), a jazz station that runs out of the Cal State Long Beach campus here in Southern California, was hosting their annual Long Beach Blues Festival they put on every Labor Day weekend. KLON had some pretty gnarly guests over the years and 1990 was no exception. That weekend had Etta James and Bo Diddley headlining Ruth Brown, Albert Collins, Roy Gaines, Harmonica Fats, Little Milton, Lonnie Mack, Yank Rachell, Otis Rush, and Johnny Winter, to name a few. My old man was a card-carrying subscriber to KLON, so as soon as he heard Diddley and James were headlining, he hit me up to see if I wanted to go. I quickly agreed, being I never saw any of these legends get down with the get down onstage.

Arriving in the early afternoon out in the CSLB baseball fields, we both noticed there weren't a whole hell of a lot of places to stand or sit. A lot of people had arrived even earlier, with full-on blanket and beach chair camp setups facing the stage, far back as the eyes could see. "Fuck this," I told my dad, "follow me." We started bee lining down the side of the field, trying to scope out an empty patch of grass that we could plant both of our asses on along the way. It started looking hopeless as we got closer and closer to the stage barricade. Then I noticed an older couple sitting in chairs with a small blanket laid out in front of 'em. There was a perfect section of grass in front of their blanket, just enough for two tall fuckers to sit down on, directly in the center of the field and like thirty or forty feet away from the stage.

I quickly cut off from my father, hopping in between the groups of people leading up to the couple, and asked them, "'Scuse me, is anyone sitting on this patch of grass in front of you? My dad and I are trying to find a place to watch." They laughed and replied, "As long as you don't stand up in front of us, sure, you can even share our blanket!" Score. I waved my father over and everyone introduced themselves, talking about who they were looking forward to seeing, and it turned out to be a really great afternoon. Later in the day while the stage hands were setting up for Etta James, I noticed some dude in a white suit and matching hat, leaning on a cane inside the opening of the chain link fence near the security entrance leading backstage.

"Holy shit, dad. Look. I think that's Willie Dixon," I told him, pointing over to where this guy was standing.

"Get the fuck outta here," he replied, thinking I was pulling his leg, as we often did with each other.

"No, I really think it's him," I said, getting up and started to walk over to find out.

As I got closer, I could hear my dad laughing, "What the hell are you doing?" I couldn't pass up this chance.

Now, for those of you who don't know who Willie Dixon is, he's basically one of the few people who helped forge the Chicago blues sound in the late forties, one of the genre's songwriting greats, not to mention being an instrumental session player, producer, staff songwriter, and talent scout for the Chess Records team. Chuck Berry got his break signing with Chess Records, and Willie Dixon played bass on a huge grip of Berry's golden era singles. And regardless if you're a fan or not, The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin also owe a huge debt of their careers to Willie Dixon, songwriting (biting)-wise.

As I made my way up to this man dressed in white, I was seriously tripping, 'cause I could quickly see it was in fact the man himself, but he was completely alone, just looking around at everyone.

"Mr. Dixon?" I asked, not knowing what the hell to expect.

He turned his head around and replied, "Yes, and who are you?" sticking his hand out to shake.

I laughed, shaking his hand, "Man, I ain't anyone, just a fan."

"Well," he said smiling, "You must be someone. You know who I am." After introducing myself, I told him I was there with my father, and how much I

JESSEE ZEROXED

"Only you would walk up to a blues legend and start talking." Yeah, my dad was right; and why the hell not?

had admired his influence on a lot of the rock and roll artists I liked. "Let me guess, Zeppelin fan?" he asked.

"I'm a drummer, cut me some slack, Willie!" and we both laughed. "Well, for a white boy, Jimmy Page can play guitar, but we both know how that goes," and he winked and we both started laughing again. Before I walked back over to my father, I told Willie how incredible I thought it was that he of all people played bass on Chuck Berry's first stretch of material with Chess.

"That was all Chuck. I was just the session player, but I think it all turned out okay, don't you?" he said with a big smile on his face. We talked more about Berry and him working in the studio together, then I shook his hand again, thanked him for everything, and started walking back over to my dad.

Shaking his head, laughing, my father asked, "What the hell were you two talking about? Catching up on old times?"

"Heh, nah, just music, dad," I replied, "Just music."

He just smiled, continuing to shake his head, "Only *you* would walk up to a blues legend and start talking." Yeah, my dad was right; and why the hell not?

Sad thing is, Chuck Berry headlined that festival two years later, the same year Willie Dixon passed away. If I know my old man, I'm sure he's recounting the story of that afternoon, somewhere with both of those legends, yukking it up, and having a ball.

Rock in peace, Chuck Berry.
Thank you.

–Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

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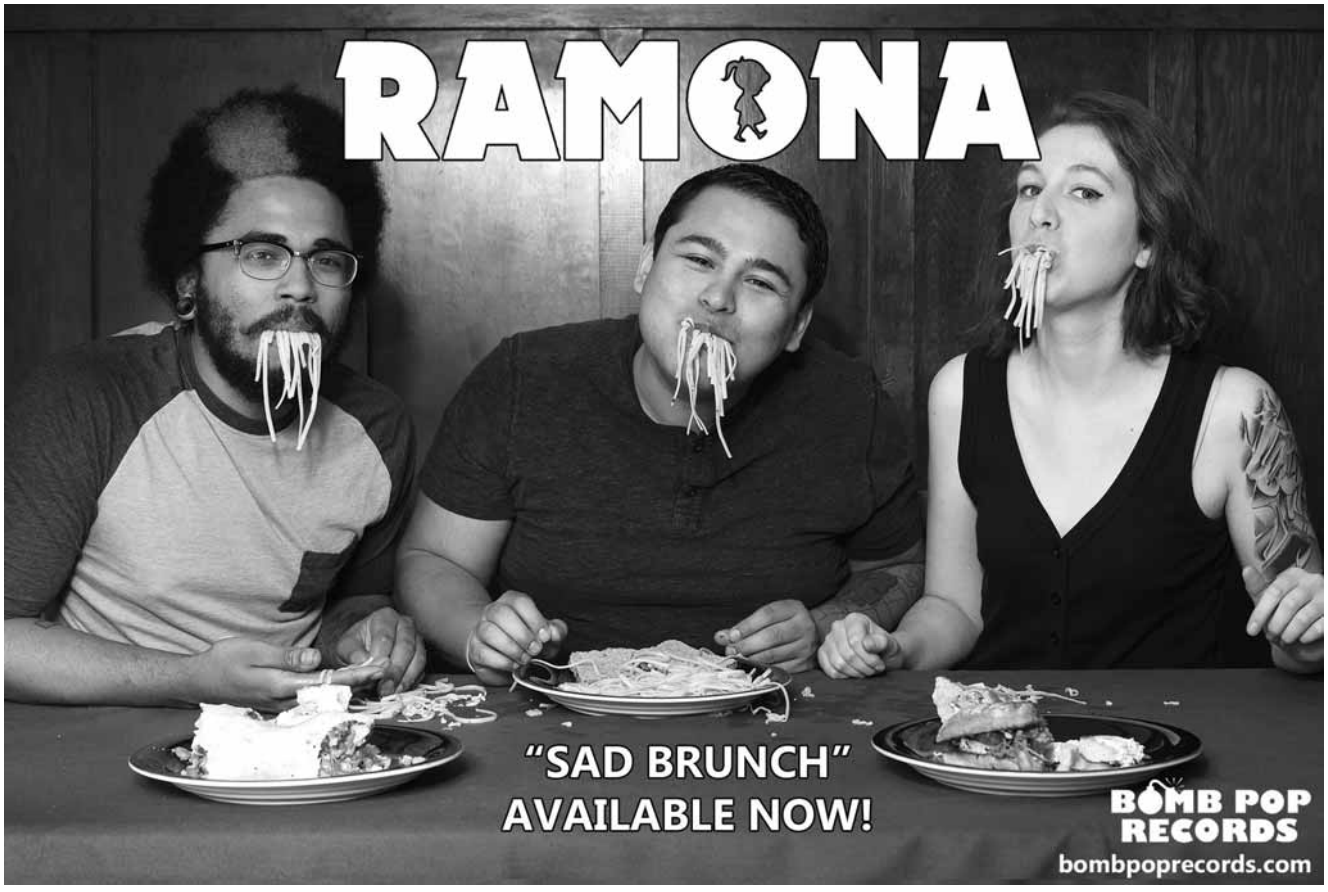
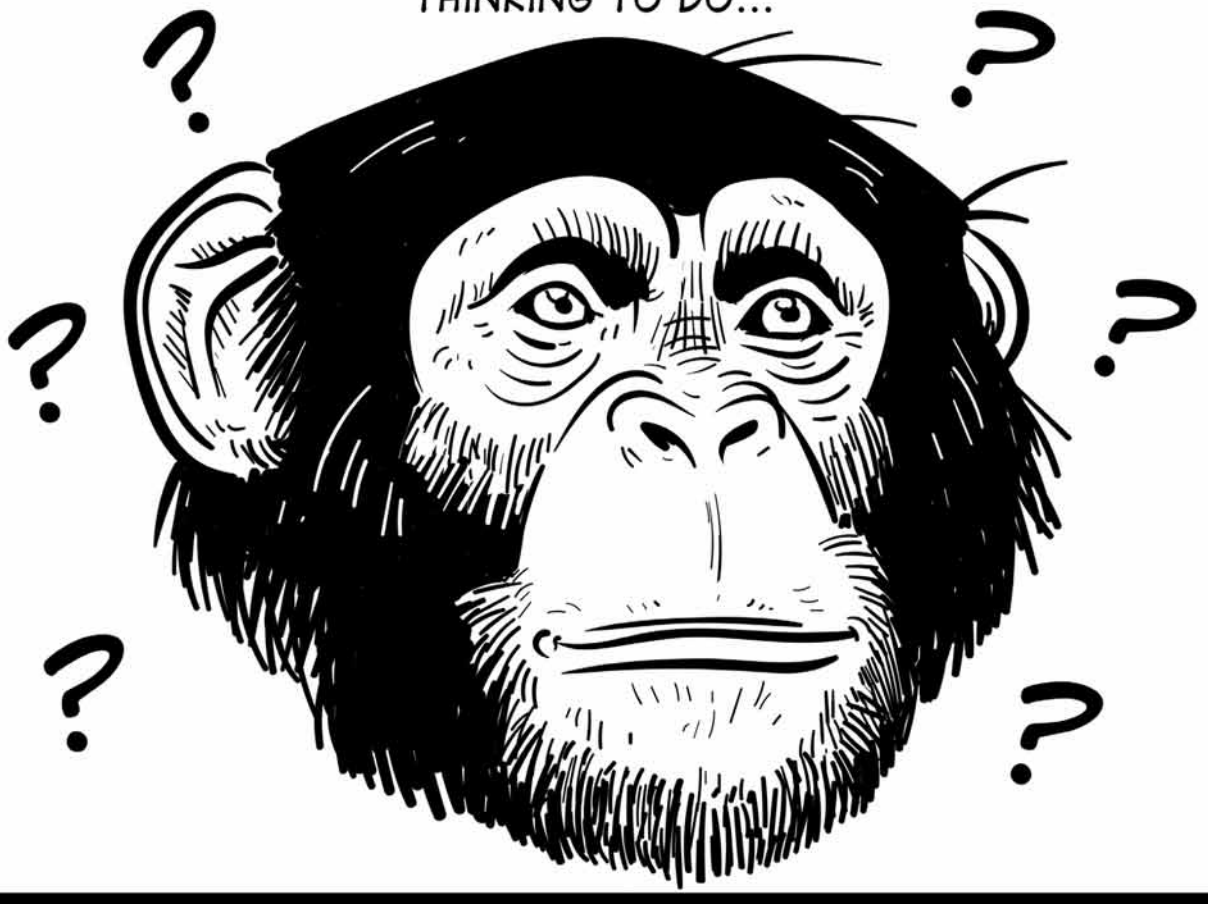


CHICO SIMIO #60

"DECISIONS, DECISIONS..."

I HAVE A BIG DECISION TO MAKE. AFTER WORKING IN THE SAME COMPANY FOR 25 YEARS, THEY SOLD OUR BUILDING AND THEY ARE SHUTTING US DOWN. I KNOW I SHOULD BE SCARED, AND I AM A LITTLE, BUT THEN AGAIN, I'M NOT. I THINK NOW IS THE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO REALLY MAKE ART MY SOLE EVERY DAY PURPOSE. MY DAUGHTER HAS A COUPLE MORE YEARS LEFT OF COL-LEGE AND SHE IS THRIVING ON HER OWN. I HAVE MONEY SAVED UP ALREADY TO HELP HER WHEN SHE NEEDS IT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, SO SHE'S COVERED. BUT I CAN'T HELP FEELING A BIT SELFISH. CAN I REALLY NOT HAVE A "REGULAR" JOB? AM I BEING IRRESPONSIBLE BY PURSUING MY ART CAREER? AM I SHIRKING RESPONSIBILITIES? IS THIS THE TIME CLOCK SPEAKING? I GUESS I LIED, I AM SCARED. SCARED THAT I'LL BE A BURDEN TO MY FAMILY IF I CAN'T MAKE MY OWN WAY. BUT I THINK I'M MOST SCARED OF FINDING MYSELF PUNCHING A TIME CLOCK FOR ANOTHER 25 YEARS. AGAIN. MONKEY HAS SOME THINKING TO DO...



She is the victim of a broken dream.

Brown Man

He was carried by the monarch through borders
hatched in the city of lost guidance
Only the hood knows who he is
Only the hood has seen him cry
Too afraid of his own masculinity
He yells at the love who tames him
She is quiet
She is the victim
of a broken dream
So tell me brown man, why hurt her?
She is as delicate as the monarch who birthed you.

–Annissa,
(ig:@mi.jita)

Ni importa 1

I try to believe that there's a wisdom
in every part of life,
but sometimes there's no metaphor for your hype mom.
And once upon a time,
she was so beautiful,
but that was long before you—
and by now she's a falling angel; she's been falling,
and what's left of her are pieces
of her intestines, collapsed veins, and crystallized track marks.
And by the time you start to realize her,
she needs to be buried,
and all you have is to choose between gardenias or lilies.
So you decide "roses," yellow and pink.
You think "it's over, finally."
But your family is fucked and so are you.

So you
detach, but they are in your bones and
sometimes you walk along their path and want to accept them, and you.
But you know how the men have a sweet tooth
for little girls—
So you go,
go away from them.
You know it won't be so easy,
but you start your own family,
and you pick a guy you know you will hate
in a couple years.
That is why you chose him,
because really,
you want to be alone.
All the distance you made brings you back to who
and where
you came from, so when your sister tells you
about that one time she saw your mom
give a guy head for crack, or speed or heroin, you think
"at some point we all become our parents"
and you wonder what *exactly*
that means for you.

Sometimes when you least expect to be visited
your past will appear,
like when you're fucking your man and he wants you to
go down.
You
say "no"
then flip your hair and close yourself
and he rolls over.
He isn't asleep. You know
he is staring at the dirty yellow walls in the dark.
Sometimes you wake up in the morning, feeling mean,
so you resolve to drink it off;
let the devil out,
you head to the city,
to the bar,
to forget,
to let go.
The next day, in your underwear, and your man threatens to leave you,
because your vile soul was out last night,
and you want to fight him to stay,
but you know he should leave, he should go
find a "good girl,"
instead you both sit
silent in front of a bowl of soup, and
then you take
the sum of all your life's bullshit—
you feel it tightens in your throat,
you dare it to tighten further,
you pray it kills you before you have to do it your fucken' self.
Most times it doesn't make any sense
and sometimes
it pulls on you
and you get to stop
for a minute
without blinking or breathing—
you wait—
because you know through experience that
this too shall pass.

Ni importa 2

She says she is tired of being hungry,
"No matter how much I eat,"
she says, "I can't ever get full."
She says a lot of things but I believe her when she says this. She
felt that way long before the nine years since her intestines became
exposed. Missing pieces since before the babies came,
before the three men who fathered her six children,
before the overdose, before the alcohol and heroin, before
she tried to send her firstborn out with the dope man, before, before,
before all that.
Even before her daddy her big brother her stepdad and all the others
started burying their demons
on her tits and in her skin, when she told me
"Mija, every one has their 'intentions.'"

–Rebecca Gonzales
(ig: @bt_grl)

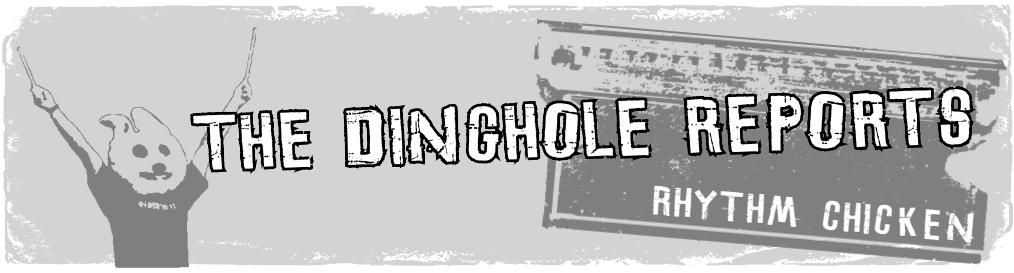
I have loved the wrong people
And I have allowed myself to love
them too much. I feel guilty.
Guilty because I loved them
much more than I could love myself.

You see, when I love—I only know how
to love so much my heart is going to explode into
fireworks
I feel ashamed for not loving myself
as much, and not protecting myself
from those who couldn't show me real love

I don't know if I can give my love again,
but I know that loving myself is the only love I need.

–Alex Romero

You see, when I love— I only know how to love so much my heart is going to explode into fireworks



Wisconsin punk and polka cross-over!

Holy! Shit!

I was nine years old on September 7, 1980. Even though that was thirty-seven years ago, I remember that day's Packer game like yesterday. Back then, the Green Bay Packers were not exactly the dominating powerhouse they can *sometimes* be today. They were hosting their arch rivals, the Chicago Bears, at historic Lambeau Field. They hadn't beaten the Bears in what seemed like decades, an eternity to my nine-year-old mind. My two older brothers and I were on the edge of our seats because this game had gone into overtime, tied up at 6-6. The Packers were attempting a field goal to win the game. For them to simply make that field goal would mean certain victory and intense celebration unlike the city had seen for years. What happened next was a historic dose of Packer lunacy I'll never forget.

Our placekicker was a goofy-looking chap by the name of Chester Marcol. He wore big, thick glasses like Coke bottle bottoms, and his jersey bore the lucky number thirteen. My older brothers and I held our breath while the ball was snapped and Chester kicked the ball. We felt a very brief moment of despair as the kick was blocked... *but wait!* The ball deflected back towards Chester, who somehow managed to catch the ball between his outstretched hands and his helmet! The Bears' defense was just starting to celebrate their blocked field goal when mass confusion set in. They could only watch dumbfounded as Chester ran around them and across the goal line holding the football against the top of his helmet. *What the HELL just happened?*

And just like that, the Packers beat the Bears for the first time in years. They beat the Bears with a play straight out of a circus sideshow. It was so bizarrely goofy; it could *only* be pulled off by the Packers! My brothers and I and all of Green Bay was literally bouncing off the walls. I remember the next morning I still had no voice from all the screaming. I picked up that morning's copy of the *Green Bay News Chronicle* off our front porch. The front page showed a huge picture of Chester being carried on his teammates' shoulders with a huge one-word headline that plainly exclaimed "MARCOL!"

Let's fast forward to this last January. I had an unexpected gift in my post office box from the fine gentlemen at Milwaukee's Rushmor Records. It was a genuine NFL Packer jersey with the lucky number thirteen and *MARCOL* in big letters across the back! I was most graciously flabbergasted! There was a note inside which explained they couldn't think of anyone who should wear it more than the Rhythm Chicken, seeing as how in the history of the Green Bay Packers, Chester Marcol was the only player ever born in Poland! He was born in Opole, a town I would pass through on the train quite often while living in Krakow! Fittingly so, the note ends by saying "GO PACK GO! XXOO, Bill, Kate, Dan, and Wolfie" (the record shop schnauzer!). Sometimes my friends are just too awesome.

Now let's fast forward to February 2017, to the quaint, pristine, and quiet little village of Ephraim, Wis. Yes, it's that time of year again! Time for Ephraim City Limits, the little punk rock music "festival" that could! Once a year, in the dead of winter, I turn my little soup diner (fire capacity of twelve) into Ephraim's first and only punk rock concert hall! As usual, Milwaukee's fierce foursome Holy Shit! headlines the show with their blistering hardcore offerings. This year, the band that filled the second band slot (yeah, this festival is huge, lemme tell ya!) was Dusk from Appleton, Wis. There were inquiries as to whether the Rhythm Chicken would be performing after his recent back surgery, but no forecast could be made.

The previous winter's Ephraim City Limits was cancelled due to the ongoing back problems, so there was a painful two-year wait for this one. With the help of my gracious Hen and my two shop employees, this year's ECL did indeed happen! Holy Shit! arrived in the late afternoon to soak up some soup and Rhythm Chili before hitting some northwoods beer vendors. A few hours after closing up my shop, the transformation from soup shop to punk rock concert hall was complete. The bands showed up. The fans showed up. People arrived from Green Bay, Milwaukee, Appleton, and even Wausau (yes, Wausau!). Very numerous cold cans of cheap beer were within reach from literally every square foot of the venue. The stage was set. The wick simply awaited lighting.

In Ephraim, the punk shows historically start *on time.* At exactly 8 PM, Dusk took the kitchen, er, stage, and the crowd was treated to this new outfit, which includes Amos from Tenement on bass. They started out with a few rockers that seemed to be influenced by the Figgs and the Beatles before going into a few slower numbers, which reminded me of George Jones and Hank Williams Sr. It was the first time a band played a slide steel guitar or a violin to an Ephraim punk show! The *punker* members of the crowd couldn't help but nod their heads and tap their toes to the captivating performance. Halfway through their set, I suddenly saw the faces of Bill and Dan from Rushmor Records as they entered and soaked up some Dusk, their first ECL experience! Dusk was the perfect band to ease Ephraim City Limits back to life.

Next up were Holy Shit!, who took the kitchen, er stage, by storm! Tabman, their singer, instantly was up on the soup counter and falling onto the crowd (which was estimated at about forty people). As is always the case, they completely set the show on fire. Ripping through many of their favorites, including one of mine, "We're Poor, Fuck You." The contrast within a village of yacht boys and a few millionaires was never more striking. The crowd was hungry for action-packed intensity, and these guys were just what the doctor ordered. Again, it's always amazing to see Tabman get body-passed across my dining room, which is about ten feet by fifteen feet. Punk rock!

I was at my usual post, standing at the front door with one eye on the band and one eye always looking, outside half-expecting the cops to show up and bust the show. Then the most unexpectedly amazing thing happened. Holy Shit! added one special song as their final offering of the evening, dedicating it to the Rhythm Chicken. Then it happened. One of Wisconsin's most brutal and red hot hardcore bands played a *polka song*. Not only did they play an uncharacteristically polka song, but a cover of Wisconsin's very own Happy Schnapps Combo! "No, I Don't Wanna Do Dat" is one of the Schnappers' best hit songs! Tabman cracked a beer open and was cheersing cans with the crowd during every verse!

Do ya wanna get a haircut?
NO I DON'T WANNA DO DAT!
Do ya wanna buy insurance?
NO I DON'T WANNA DO DAT!
Do ya wanna swallow poison?
NO I DON'T WANNA DO DAT!
Do ya wanna go out to a bar?
YAA! YAA! YAA!

It was a pivotal and historic point in Wisconsin punk and polka cross-over! The crowd totally ate it up as many a beer can got knocked back!

BECKY RODRIQUEZ

If I didn't want a fresh human turd dumped on my back deck I should probably not host punk shows.

DJ Dinghole Report #1: Ruckus a la Andy Kaufman! (Rhythm Chester DJ gig #1!)

Shortly after Holy Shit! cleared the kitchen, I staggered down from the upstairs carrying my Hamilton Electronics Corporation traveling record player, a Rhythm Chicken 45, and wearing my new Chester Marcol jersey! Lucky #13, the Rhythm Chester, was ready to spin some wax! I pulled on the Chickenhead and cued up side B, "Live at Koz's Mini-Bowl"! A soup shop full of forty screaming punks watched as the Rhythm Chester stood next to a record player blaring the Rhythm Chicken's ruckus on vinyl! At each riotous break in the drumming action my wings hoisted two drumsticks skyward and the shop echoed with lunatic applause! DJ Rhythm Chester kinda danced a little dance and then threw the drumsticks to the crowd! I like to think the ghost of Andy Kaufman was dancing a little bit as well.

In the end, the return of Ephraim City Limits was an unquestionably punk rock event in this village's timeline. How punk rock was it? Well, this year I had three people pass out during the show: two from excessive drinking and one from the packed room being short on oxygen! One of the two who drank to sleepy-time was my employee. His night ended with him sleeping on the floor directly in front of my shop toilet. The other sleepy drinker was a female who at one point tried crawling into my fireplace... while the fire was burning.

In the morning after the bands had left heading south, I noticed someone had dumped a fresh human turd on my back deck, just outside my back door. I'm thinking maybe if my employee wasn't passed out in front of the only toilet, that crisis might have been averted. But then again, if I didn't want a fresh human turd dumped on my back deck I should probably not host punk shows.

The saddest part of Chester's story is that in 1986 he unsuccessfully tried committing suicide by swallowing a cocktail of battery acid, rat poison, and vodka. The good news is he is still alive and kicking (also the name of his autobiography) and is now a drug and alcohol abuse counselor in upper Michigan.

DJ Rhythm Chester, on the other hand, is now considering offering his services for weddings, birthday parties, and sausage shop grand openings!

–Rhythm Chicken

A SCUMBURBIA™ STORY
"TIME TRAVEL TUNES"
Oh God. Claire, please change the song.
Huh? What? Why?
You.. gave him a song?
Ugh, this song is like a trigger for me. It reminds me of John... I.. gave him this song.
No, not gave him A song - I gave him this song.
What do you mean? You've always liked this song. And we saw them live when we were like, 12, remember?
Well yeah, I've always liked this song. But one day, while driving home from school it came up on shuffle and something just CLICKED.
It instantly locked on to John and is now solidified in my head as his song. So of course I gave it to him.
Now whenever I hear it, it INSTANTLY transports me back to when we were together and I was sitting on his bed, watching him try to tune his guitar.
Damn.
Anything you can do to... get it back?
Nah, it's forever his now.
And that sucks.
Shit! I'm sorry. OK, I'll change it.
CLICK!
Can you actually change this song also?
Ugh, whod you give THIS song to?
Oh, nobody.
This song just SUCKS.
END
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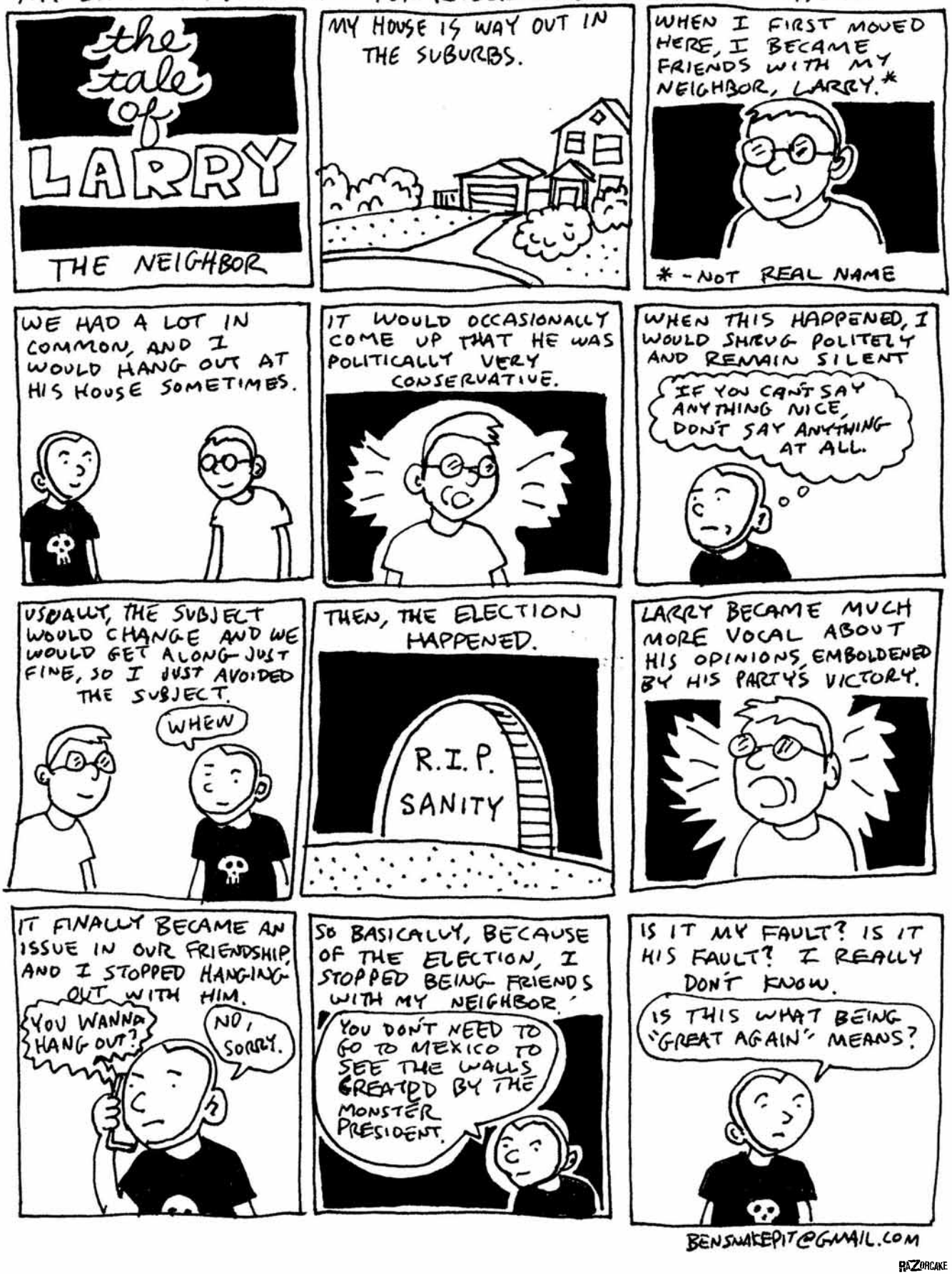
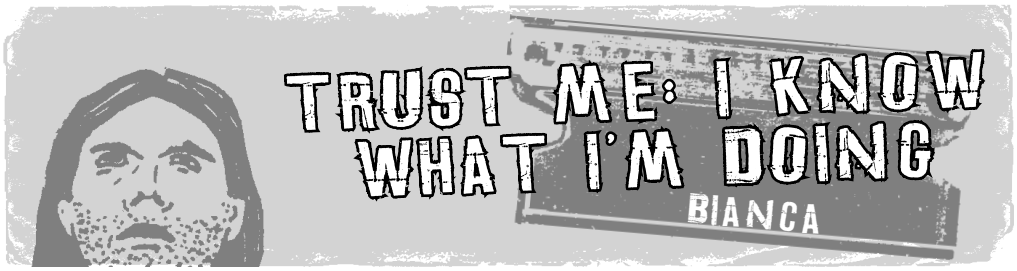
MY EIGHTY-FIRST COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT


the tale of LARRY
THE NEIGHBOR
MY HOUSE IS WAY OUT IN THE SUBURBS.
WHEN I FIRST MOVED HERE, I BECAME FRIENDS WITH MY NEIGHBOR, LARRY.*
*-NOT REAL NAME
WE HAD A LOT IN COMMON, AND I WOULD HANG OUT AT HIS HOUSE SOMETIMES.
IT WOULD OCCASIONALLY COME UP THAT HE WAS POLITICALLY VERY CONSERVATIVE.
WHEN THIS HAPPENED, I WOULD SHRUG POLITELY AND REMAIN SILENT
IF YOU CAN'T SAY ANYTHING NICE, DON'T SAY ANYTHING AT ALL.
USUALLY, THE SUBJECT WOULD CHANGE AND WE WOULD GET ALONG JUST FINE, SO I JUST AVOIDED THE SUBJECT.
WHEW
THEN, THE ELECTION HAPPENED.
R.I.P. SANITY
LARRY BECAME MUCH MORE VOCAL ABOUT HIS OPINIONS, EMBOLDENED BY HIS PARTY'S VICTORY.
IT FINALLY BECAME AN ISSUE IN OUR FRIENDSHIP, AND I STOPPED HANGING OUT WITH HIM.
YOU WANNA HANG OUT?
NO, SORRY.
SO BASICALLY, BECAUSE OF THE ELECTION, I STOPPED BEING FRIENDS WITH MY NEIGHBOR.
YOU DON'T NEED TO GO TO MEXICO TO SEE THE WALLS CREATED BY THE MONSTER PRESIDENT.
IS IT MY FAULT? IS IT HIS FAULT? I REALLY DON'T KNOW.
IS THIS WHAT BEING "GREAT AGAIN" MEANS?

BENSNAKEPIT@GMAIL.COM



I was holding my shit together just fine until our office copier went rogue.

The Copier

About ten years ago, I returned home from a year abroad in Southeast Asia paid for by a fellowship to teach English. I was fortunate to have had an opportunity to spend a year with an incredible host family, travel throughout the region, and learn a bit of a new language. It was a great experience that left me feeling powerful, energized, and excited about my next project: going home to L.A. and finding a job.

I wasn't totally sure what I wanted to do, but I knew I didn't want to teach anymore. The year I spent teaching abroad had been awesome, but it also convinced me I wasn't cut out for the profession. I thought being a successful teacher required confidence and strength I just didn't have. It was hard for me to speak with authority and enforce rules; without either of those abilities, I was basically screwed in front of a room of students who never wanted to be in class.

I arrived in L.A. in August and by October, all of the enthusiasm I'd had post-Asia had fully worn off and I was getting bitter. I had no prospects, no interviews, not even any replies to the dozens of emails I sent out. I was living in my childhood home, feeling like an idiot, and desperate to get a job—any job. So I was grateful and took the chance when a friend hooked me up with a short-term gig teaching English as a Second Language in downtown L.A. substituting for a teacher on vacation.

The best thing about the job was that it was a two-week engagement, because, as mentioned, I did not want to teach. If had to, though, this wasn't a terrible place. I loved my students. They were adults from all over the world who were interesting and smart, here in the supposed hope of improving their English enough to pass a test so they could go to college in the L.A. area. They were the least dedicated students I'd come across, but they were very entertaining. I enjoyed my coworkers immensely, too, and the pay was okay. I know my situation could have been a lot worse.

I kept telling myself if I could just tough it out for two weeks, I'd have some money to buy new interview clothes—clothes which would propel me to career greatness! On the train in to work every day, I recited the mantra, "It's just two weeks."

But after the coworker I had been substituting for returned, another one suddenly had to take two weeks off for a family emergency, so I covered for her. Immediately after that teacher returned, another coworker quit to take care of her ailing father. Since I was already kind of working there and no one had complained about me, I was offered the part-time job. I had zero other prospects, so I accepted, telling myself that since it was part-time, I'd have hours of free time to look for other jobs after work.

Flash forward five years. I was still working at the same school. I was fully miserable, existing as the filling in a sandwich of guilt. On one hand, I felt miserable because I never wanted to do this job long-term, but I hadn't figured out a way to do anything else and get paid. On the other hand, I felt ungrateful for not appreciating the fact that I had a job at all.

This deep, inner turmoil probably benefitted my students. To compensate for hating my job, I threw myself into working harder. I stayed late to work on lesson plans, wrote extensive comments on students' writing assignments, and wrote up lists of cool podcasts and free online resources students could use to hear English in a variety of contexts.

All this to say I was busting my ass, but also actively hating life every day I was at work. Holding all that in was difficult, and required that everything go according to plan. I was holding my shit together just fine until our office copier went rogue.

The copier in the office had always been a temperamental piece of shit, but suddenly it was hitting new lows. It jammed every single time anyone tried to copy anything. It especially hated double-sided copies, which I tried to make to offset the incredible amount of copying all the teachers and I did. Sometimes it would jam multiple times in the course of one job. The day I spent fifteen minutes trying to make fifteen double-sided copies was a dark one.

Perhaps a quasi-solution could have been for me to stop making double-sided copies. The jams would have been less frequent (though still existent, let's be real). No fucking way was I doing that, though. Instead, because I was a totally well-adjusted person, I decided the copier could be intimidated into working better. "This is your job, Copier—to make copies. DO YOUR JOB," I muttered angrily at least once a day, lightly smacking the machine while trying to make worksheets for a class that was just going to lose them before the day was over.

My hard-line tactics never worked, but I kept trying, kept slamming my head against a metaphorical wall every day. That stupid copier knew just how to push my buttons and never failed to whip me up in a dense froth of rage in sixty seconds or less.

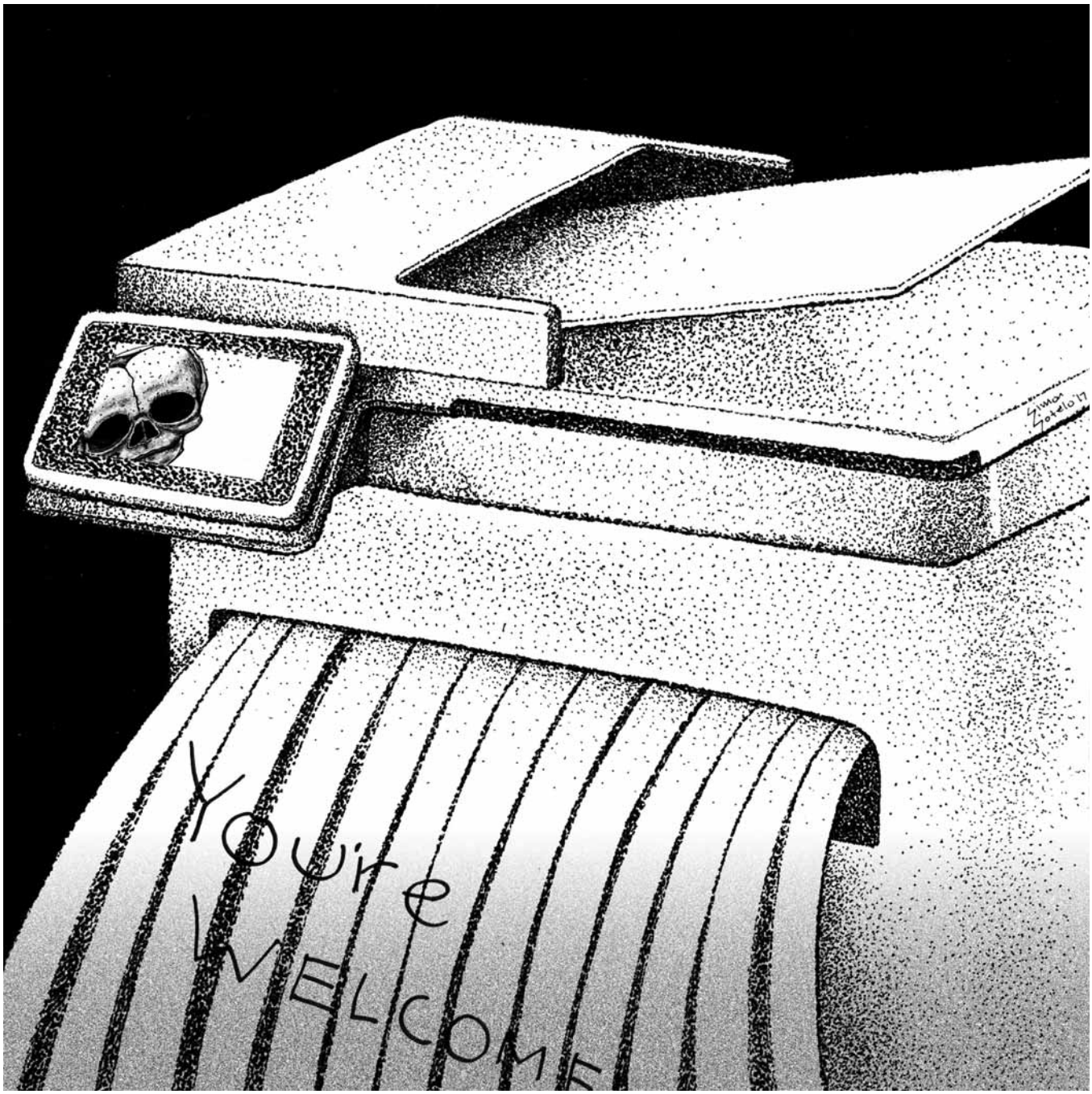
Gradually, I figured out that what really pissed me off was that this stupid piece of crap was even still there. I'd seen a couple of teachers get fired in my time at the school, but we were still paying to have drums of ink and boxes of paper delivered for this hunk of junk that, for months, couldn't do the one thing it was supposed to do.

One day, dead-set on making a double-sided test for my students and ready to knee the copier, it came over me I hadn't tried to be nice. When I opened the top of the copier to place my paper on the glass, I did it gently, without my usual rage. "Please," I whispered. "Please just make these copies and I'll leave you alone. I know you do so much for us and we never say thank you, but I'm saying sorry for all that now and I'm asking you nicely: please, just do it."

The copier made the copies, but I could tell that she did so begrudgingly. The papers came out slower than usual.

As I waited, expecting to have to clear out a paper jam at any second, I thought about the copier. Her goals, her plans for the future. Maybe she never wanted to be a copier.

That stupid copier knew just how to push my buttons and never failed to whip me up in a dense froth of rage in sixty seconds or less.



SIMON SOTELO

Maybe she had wanted to toast bagels for children in a nice suburban home, or to send faxes to exotic locations around the globe. I bet nobody ever asked her what she wanted. Maybe that's why she didn't do her job.

And maybe that's why I was so angry. It was more than the fact that she wasn't doing her job. I was mad she was doing something about the fact that she wasn't happy. She was staging this silent but aneurysm-inducing protest, fucking up all of our miserable shit because she wasn't getting what she wanted. It was a dick move, but at least she wasn't pushing down all the anger about having to do this job she hated. She was doing something about it. It was passive aggressive and it ruined everyone's day, but she was resisting.

The copier knew she was in a position of power. She knew my workplace would never put down the cash to buy a new, compliant copier who loved its job, who never jammed. She was untouchable. And wasn't she a little like me? Weren't we both here, in this school, where we didn't want to be, doing things we didn't want to do?

On Monday morning, there was a new copier in the office. Holy shit. I had gotten myself all worked up, inspired by some crap I was projecting onto a damn copy machine, and here was this reminder that, no, the office copy machine is not your rebel leader, it is a copy machine. And even though your bosses are cheap, they are not so cheap they won't replace something that doesn't work with something that does.

I stopped pretending like if I worked harder, I'd like my job better, and I just put all that energy into trying to find something else. It took me two years to get another job but they were normal years, not years where I was learning life lessons from the coffee machine in the office kitchen.

Wherever the copier is, I hope she's happy.

–Bianca

Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column - Citizen Fish

Chris Boarts Larson, www.slugandlettuce.net | fb.me/slugandlettuce

Citizen Fish at ABC NO RIO, NYC • April 20, 1991

Citizen Fish and ABC NO RIO in the early '90s represent the perfect time and place; the ultimate of everything for me. The first time Citizen Fish played at ABC NO RIO, it was like a dream come true. In the middle of a packed basement, everyone was so excited and moving as one to the pulsing beat; singing along with smiles and losing their minds.

In a no-gods, no-masters ideology of punk rock, Dick Lucas was a bit of a hero to me and even as a new band—they were also part the Subhumans, an old favorite of mine—for once, I was not longing for something in the past. I was living in the perfect moment. They returned to the States every spring and played at ABC NO RIO in what sorta of became an annual ritual. After a few years, that wasn't enough for me. I started to follow them around to more shows, and finally started to tour with them. Citizen Fish are still a favorite. Citizen Fish and ABC still represent the perfect harmony of everything I love about DIY punk rock.

–Chris Boarts Larson
slugandlettuce.net, facebook.com/SlugandLettuce

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO PEACE CORPS SERVICE

by Christopher Gordon

Layout by Eric Baskauskas

I was twelve years old the first time I heard about the Peace Corps. My cousin Kerry wanted to join, but my uncle Mike wouldn't let her go because he didn't think it was safe for women. She ended up not going, and I always felt bad for her. When I was twenty-one and about to graduate from college, I found an advertisement on the Peace Corps' website that said, "Can't decide between the Peace Corps and grad school—why not both?" It was a link for the Masters International Program. It would take me four more years before I actually ended up joining, but my mind was set. I was going to be a Peace Corps Volunteer, and nobody was going to talk me out of it.

I can't describe the force that drove me other than it was so deeply ingrained in me that this was something I was going to do. I felt really inspired by those old videos of President Kennedy describing his vision for what would eventually become the Peace Corps. It made sense to want to help people who were asking for it. It seemed admirable. There was something so romantic about the idea of leaving everything behind to go abroad, learn a new language, live with people in their communities, and volunteer.

My dad's a Hungarian immigrant who left Budapest in 1977. His previous eight years were spent applying for visas only to be denied. His distaste for communism wasn't enough to grant him immediate access into the United States. He ended up in a refugee camp in Austria before eventually making it to New York and later settling in California. My mom left a strict Catholic family behind in New Jersey at the age of twenty-three to move to California with a very minimal support system out west. It was in Los Angeles that my parents met.

I think it's partly in my blood to take some risks, and I was quite honestly looking for my own adventure. One of the things I've learned from my parents over the years was the importance of following your dreams, and I was ready to follow mine.

I had been on DIY punk tours before, but I never found whatever it was I was looking for. I wanted something bigger than playing to ten people in some Mid-western basement. I love my band, but I didn't feel like it was going to get any more popular, and I wasn't willing to commit to touring full time. It never felt like there was enough return in it for me or for the people in the audience. Maybe it would have been different if I had been writing better songs, or if the audience had been bigger—I honestly don't know. But I thought by joining the Peace Corps I would find what I was looking for.

Eugene Burdick and William Lederer published *The Ugly American* in 1958. The book depicted United States diplomats in Southeast Asia. Most of these depictions were commentary on the ignorance of Americans abroad. The book is said to have had a large impact on J.F.K.'s initial spark for what would eventually become the Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps was created in 1961 with the intention of sending American volunteers (mostly college educated) abroad to help countries with economic and social development. Today, the Peaces Corps' mission is to promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

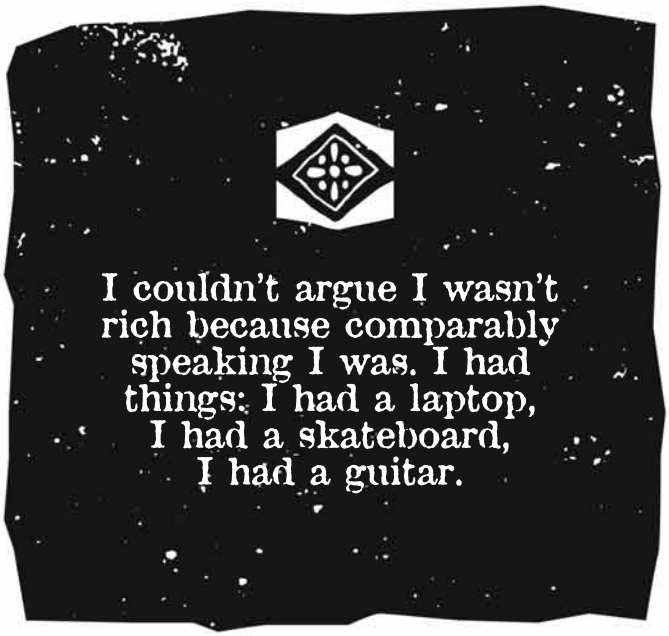
1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women

2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served

3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans

Peace Corps service is typically twenty-seven months, which is divided up by three months of training and two years of service. However, some volunteers choose to extend their service beyond the twenty-seven months. The Peace Corps currently has volunteers in five sectors, which include agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, and health. Over the last fifty-five years, more than 220,000 volunteers have served in 140 countries. There are currently 6,919 volunteers and trainees in sixty-three countries.

I served in Peace Corps Colombia from August 2014 until November 2016. Our primary project was to work directly with a Colombian counterpart to co-teach and co-plan. This idea was heavily rooted in sustainability, by modeling different teaching methods and styles and training our counterparts to practice and apply them, our counterparts would be able to use these strategies long after our two-year commitment to service ended.



During my first year, I worked with a few counterparts at the primary school level. We worked on songs, games, and had a lot of success working with phonics. My second year was spent working with a counterpart at the high school level.

Before joining, I wanted to learn Spanish, travel, and teach English abroad. At the time, the Peace Corps had a program called the Masters International Program (MIP), which participated with colleges all around the country. I applied to Humboldt State University in northern California and moved up there in August of 2013 to study teaching English as second/foreign language. I took graduate level English classes for two semesters before eventually leaving for Colombia.

During my time at Humboldt State University I studied second language acquisition, teaching reading and writing, teaching English as a second/foreign language, and English grammar among other things. The idea was that these topics would all eventually help me and that the information would translate into my work once I arrived at site.

While I was at HSU, I worked two jobs. One was as a morning care provider at an elementary school in Arcata. I also worked for dining services at the University, mostly in the dish room. Halfway through the fall semester, I was awarded the State University Grant from the office of financial aid. My tuition went from $4,200 a semester to only $800 a semester.

I saved $8,500 before starting my masters program to get me through my first year at HSU. When volunteers finish their Peace Corps service, they're awarded a readjustment allowance of about $7,000. I knew this would get me through the last semester of my Masters program when I returned. I also hoped that it would give me enough to take a trip after I finished my service. Receiving the State University Grant from financial aid allowed me to save more than I originally expected.

Additionally, in order to prepare for my coming to Colombia I took two semesters of college-level Spanish, which I unfortunately had forgotten by the time I arrived. I also read *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *100 Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez (in English). I read books about the history of Colombia, *la violencia*, and books about their art and geography. I wrote *Maximum Rock'n'roll* a letter about their punk scene, and a few months later a scene report was published. I wrote *Thrasher* a letter about their skate scene and… never heard anything back from them.

By the time I left for Peace Corps, I was as mentally prepared as I was ever going to be Our group arrived in Colombia exactly two weeks and three days after Michael Brown was shot and killed in Ferguson, Missouri by Darren Wilson. I spent much of my time in training trying to keep up with the unraveling events of the tragic killing and the protests that followed. Unfortunately, I read about the deaths of more black Americans at the hands of white police officers while serving abroad. These killings never made news in Colombia, and so the way I processed them was usually alone. It went as follows that I would have to process two years of overwhelmingly terrible news alone in front of a computer screen with limited internet access.

During our three months of training, thirty-two other trainees and I lived in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia on the Caribbean coast. I lived in the barrio Silencio and took an hour-long bus ride to and from our training facility every Monday through Friday for eleven weeks.

Most volunteers overwhelmingly dislike training because they feel eager to start their service. But I loved it. We had intensive Spanish classes every day for four hours. We also had training in Colombian culture, personal safety and security, basic first-aid, and the technical aspects we would encounter on the job. I eventually swore-in on November 14, 2014 and became a Peace Corps Volunteer after taking an oath and singing the Colombian and the American national anthems.

When I finished training, I moved across the city to a new host family's house. During this time, we were on break for a few months because of the way the school schedule worked out, so I had a lot of time to read and hang out. It was also during this time my mom called me to tell me she needed to have neck surgery. She said she didn't tell me anything before I left because she wasn't sure if it was going to be necessary and didn't want to discourage me from going. While my mom was recovering from neck surgery, my dad had his second stroke. I wanted to go home badly, but my mom said my older sister and her husband would be moving home to take care of my dad. Again, she convinced me to stay when I felt like I shouldn't.

After my sister moved home, I was reassured again I wasn't needed. I ultimately decided to stay because I felt like I had come so far. I had just finished training. I was in-country. My Spanish was improving. This had been my dream for years, and I wasn't ready to give it up. It was probably selfish to stay, but in the moment I felt like that was what I needed to do. I knew that if I had quit, I would regret it the minute I got home. I love my parents, but completing my Peace Corps service was my dream and I was going to follow it.

Colombia was one of the original countries to receive Peace Corps Volunteers in 1961. They had volunteers in the country until 1981, and eventually had to pull them out because the violence and political turmoil in the country became too dangerous. We were only the fourth group of two-year Peace Corps volunteers in twenty-nine years invited back into Colombia since 2010. Almost immediately after swearing in, we were told that our statistics for thefts and robberies were the highest in all of Peace Corps and that we would have to make some serious changes if we wanted to continue being an active post.

Originally I was stationed to stay in Barranquilla and worked at a school in the southern part of the city, but after a few months, on New Year's Eve, I received a phone call from my supervisor. Most of us knew these phone calls were coming, but I was anxious anyways.

It was New Year's my supervisor told me that I would be moving to a small rural town of one thousand people called Hibacharo in the municipio of Piojo. They thought that by moving volunteers from the cities into smaller towns they would reduce the numbers of thefts and robberies. The numbers went way down, but volunteers still got robbed after the moves took place.

I packed up all of my stuff and headed out of Barranquilla after its famous Carnival celebration— the second largest in the world after Rio de Janeiro—in mid-February 2015. I left my really comfortable city apartment for something a lot closer to what I had originally envisioned my life would be like once I joined the Peace Corps. I was the first white person to ever live in the town. I studied African American history in college, but this felt like the first time I was forced to think about race in a real way. I wasn't just reading about race in some book. I was living it every day. It was the first time in my life that I was "other-ed." It was the first time in my life everyone looked

at me suspiciously when I walked into restaurants or grocery stores. It was the first time I didn't belong. Most of the people knew my name by the end of the first week, but that doesn't mean that everyone was receptive to me living there.

Colombia has a long history of violence, and a large portion of the population is made up of displaced people. So it makes sense why Colombians would be skeptical of my presence or my intentions, especially when many of them had never seen anyone who looked like me outside of a television screen.

Still, the feelings I felt while living in Hibacharo were overwhelmingly of love and warmth. The people in town were indescribably generous with what little they had. They went out of their way to make sure that I was as comfortable as I could be in every situation. It's these feelings of love and kindness I wish to share with Americans about my experience abroad.

In Hibacharo, we got water once a week that filled up our *alberca* (water tank). We used the water for everything from cleaning, to showering, to cooking. The *alberca* didn't have a lid on it, which meant I saw mosquito larva swimming around in the water. I remember taking a deep breath before my first bucket shower and just giving in to the idea that this was my life now. Eventually, I got used to it.

My host family was really amazing. They took a liking to me quickly, and by that point, my Spanish had improved enough to where I could communicate with them about most things. I had a five-year-old host brother and a thirteen-year-old host sister who I walked with to school everyday. They were my best friends in town and they kept me busy.

The move to Hibacharo was really isolating, but I did my best to talk to other volunteers on the phone everyday. I was still feeling really shitty about everything that was happening with my parents back home, but after a few weeks, life in Hibacharo seemed to become normal.

After swearing-in, we began getting paid our volunteer salary. It was about 1.000.000 COP (Colombian Pesos) a month, which averaged to about $300 USD. The Peace Corps had our housing prices and rent agreements already written which meant that we couldn't negotiate for cheaper rent or find our own housing. Our rent was $375.00 a month, which was a considerable portion of our paycheck. We could then decide to pay our host family to cook us meals, or we could grocery shop for ourselves and cook our own meals. After rent and food was taken care of, we had enough for transportation and a little left over every month for recreation. It wasn't a lot of money, but it was enough.

There was always an overwhelming sense of guilt because many of us had sacrificed our lives and relationships back in the United States to essentially live in Colombia for two years while only making $300 a month. Yet, our $300 a month was still so much more money than the majority of the people in our communities made. In Hibacharo everyone assumed I was rich because I was white, and I was from the United States. I couldn't argue I wasn't rich because comparably speaking I was. I had things: I had a laptop, I had a skateboard, I had a guitar. The Peace Corps gave us cell phones and then upgraded us to smart phones. But I didn't feel rich.

Obviously, it was never about the money. No one joins the Peace Corps to make or save money, but there were so many times when I felt guilty for having it. I remember asking my host mom for more rice one night, and she told me that my host dad hadn't eaten yet. I felt terrible. I went to bed hungry that night. In Hibacharo, I went to bed hungry a lot. My nutrition became an issue. As a vegetarian I had problems getting enough protein. I wasn't receiving enough Vitamin B-12. My levels were off. I had to start taking supplements. The medical officer had to talk to me about my diet. I started spending more of my monthly allowance on food. I started buying almonds, walnuts, and pistachios.

As volunteers in Colombia, we could use two days a month for monthly breaks. We were encouraged to use these days to go into the city to buy things we needed, to see other volunteers or to just get out of site and relax. When I lived in Hibacharo, I really needed these monthly breaks for mental health reasons. They were always a nice break away from town. To get to Barranquilla was about two and half hours by bus. Every time I left site, my host sister would say something about having so much money. She would ask me, "How can you afford to go to Barranquilla all of the time?" "Do you sleep in a hotel?" No, I sleep in a hostel. It's more affordable I would tell her. She always thought I was just pronouncing hotel incorrectly. Eventually I started feeling bad every time I left Hibacharo that I would lie to my host family to avoid the questions of money. There were kids in town that had never even been to Barranquilla. It was really difficult to explain to my host family that I could go on vacation because I saved up money washing dishes before I joined the Peace Corps.

When Colombians would ask me how much money we made, I would always try to avoid the question and the inevitable conversation by saying I was a volunteer. They would then ask, well then how do you afford to eat? I would say the Peace Corps gives us money each month for food, rent, and transportation. They always wanted to know how much we made. How much money do you spend on rent? I spend $375.00. You spend $375.00?!? Do you know that you could rent a three-bedroom house for $150.00 a month. Why do you spend so much money? You know that you're getting ripped off because you're a *gringo*, right? I know. Trust me, I know. My proudest moment living in Hibacharo was teaching kids to skateboard. I had been going through a bit of depression, and so I started waking up everyday at 5:45 and went skating. Most days on the Colombian coast are around eighty-five degrees Fahrenheit but feel like 110-115. This is because of the extreme humidity. Most complaints from volunteers are due to the heat, the mosquitoes, and the food. I couldn't skate anytime after 8:00 AM, so I started going to this concrete soccer field every morning just to push back and forth, back and forth. Eventually some neighborhood kids started showing up. There they learned to stand on the board, balance, push, fall down, and get back up again. It was really cool to watch them skateboard even if they were just pushing around on their butts.

In late May of 2015, I left Hibacharo for a few days for a technical training where we got to bring one of our counterparts from our schools. It was a nice experience. When I got back from the training my host mom said lunch was ready. I just had to heat it up, she said. My host mom told me she was going to go grocery shopping in the next town over and would be back in an hour. While I was eating lunch on the back porch, my thirteen-year-old host sister beckoned me to come shower with her. I remember saying, "What? No.", with a look of shock on my face. I went to my room and explained the situation to my supervisor over the phone. I asked if I should tell my host mom what happened, and he told me to wait.

I stayed in my room the rest of the day and went into the Peace Corps office first thing the following morning. My supervisors informed me that they would be moving me out of site. I remember my medical officer saying, "never in my thirty-one years…" I was devastated. I cried for a long time.

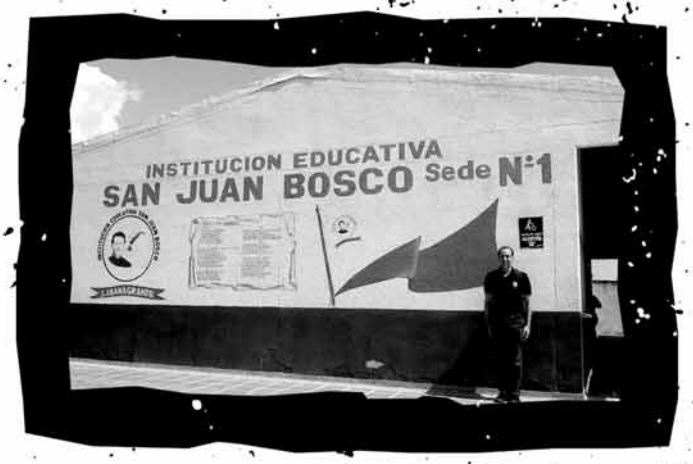
There was no way I could explain the situation to my host mom. I never got a chance to say goodbye to my host brother. In my two years in Colombia, this was by the far the worst part of my service.

I felt so shitty about leaving was because I knew that my host family could use the money I was giving them for rent. I had grown to really love them, and I believed they really loved me too, but here I was taking away their rent money.

One of the reasons I couldn't tell my host mom what my host sister had done was because I didn't want it to be her fault that I was leaving. I didn't want her to get blamed for being the reason the rent money would stop coming. My host dad was a warm and gentle man, but I was still nervous how someone might react to that information. I only lived in Hibacharo for four months, but the impact it had on me lasted the rest of my service.

Three days later, I moved to my third site and into my fourth host family's house in the town of Sabanagrande, which lies about an hour and a half bus ride south of Barranquilla. There were a lot more amenities like running water. Grocery stores with fresh fruit and vegetables were more accessible. Sabanagrande was a lot closer to the city. It was a wealthier town. It had a larger population. It was easier to find people there who spoke English. Many people had family members who lived in the United States. Many of the people in town had been to the United States themselves. A direct flight from Miami, Florida to Barranquilla, Colombia is only about two hours long.

"World is time"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Additionally, my new host family was a lot more financially stable. I went from living in a house where my host mom did all of the cooking and cleaning to living in a house where we had a caregiver who did all of the cooking and cleaning. I also had a site mate there, which helped a lot with issues of isolation. But I sometimes still wonder how different my service would have been if that situation with my host sister had never happened. When I got to Sabanagrande, I felt pretty terrible about my service thus far. I was ten months into my twenty-seven months of obligation, and I had already moved three times. I felt like I had accomplished nothing and was feeling ready to go home.

I was only in Sabanagrande for three or four days before leaving for a vacation that I had booked a few months earlier. I left the mosquitoes, the heat, the food and all my feelings of failure behind to go climb Machu Picchu on the Salkatay trail. In hindsight, I think this trip had a lot to do with me completing my service. It was a total breath of fresh air—everything I needed. I ended the vacation feeling really good about my Spanish, while checking a life goal off of my bucket list.

When I got back from vacation, my mom called me to tell me she had bought a house in Delaware. She said that her and my dad would be selling my childhood home in California before I finished service to make the move back east; with my dad having had the stroke, it had gotten too hard to take care of him without any family around. She is one of twelve kids. All of her brothers and sisters live back east. I understood, but I was sad regardless.

Around the same time, on June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that state-level bans on same-sex marriages were unconstitutional. It made me really proud to be American that day. These highs and lows from world news continued throughout my service.

One of my toughest challenges was having to face myself on a daily basis. I had to constantly question my feelings, attitudes, and prejudices. I lived and worked in a predominately Catholic country for over two years. I lived with host families the entire time. I shared meals with and lived amongst people who had a very different set of moral values than me. In Colombia's Latino and machismo culture, ideas of homosexuality and gay marriage came up a lot. There is a lot of homophobia in Colombia. Sometimes it was really difficult to listen to conversations at work. I would walk away thinking these people were homophobic, but what does that make me? Obviously all of my ideas about gender and sexuality are linked to my access to education and thereby linked to my privilege. I would try to interject my thoughts and feelings when the conversations didn't feel hostile. When I felt safe to do so. When I had the energy to do so. I did what I could. I said what I could.

This idea of writing someone off because they don't share the same values as you is problematic. So many people in my generation would rather delete friends on Facebook than have difficult conversations with the people they disagree with.

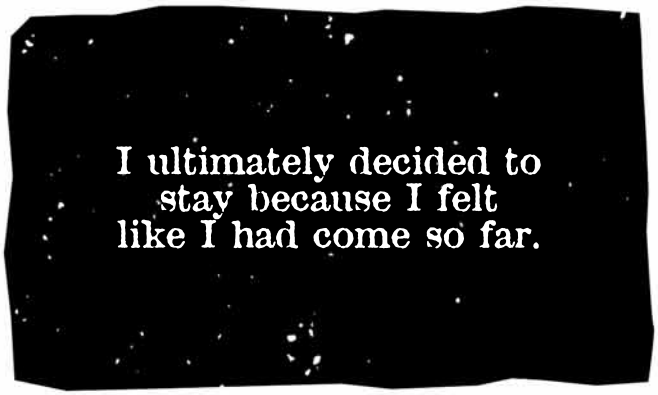
You change people's minds through education, and you can educate people through conversation. I understood that these conversations were important to have with Colombians especially when I felt like I couldn't muster the energy to do so.

Part of our job is to share ourselves with Colombians, and share ourselves completely. We are supposed to laugh with them, and cry with them, and maybe some people might disagree with me, but I think that it's okay to let them see what gets us angry. Share what makes us mad and frustrated. And I did that. I did all of those things. But how do you say FUCK your homophobia in a culturally sensitive way without jeopardizing your working or living relationships? It's hard to do, and that's what makes Peace Corps volunteers unique. This is just one example but, we had to deal with situations like this on a daily basis. I spent a lot of time during my first few months in Sabangrande sitting under my mosquito net reading books. Reading became my main form of therapy. During my service, depression hit me in waves. I saw a psychologist for the first time in my life. One of the things I loved about the Peace Corps was the medical coverage. I felt like I had the best medical insurance I've ever had. I'm not sure how much the psychologist helped, but it was always a nice excuse to get out of town for the day. During this time, I had some of the darkest thoughts I've ever had. There were days where I wanted to kill myself, but those thoughts always passed and they never lasted long. I knew I couldn't say anything to the therapist though because they would send me home, so I found ways to deal with it.

It's cliché and it gets said all the time, but skateboarding saved my life. It really did. I eventually met some high school kids in town who skated. We started skating together every Friday. Kids from neighboring towns took the bus to come skate with us. By the end of my service, our group grew from four to well over twenty kids. I exposed them to new moves like streetplants and bonelesses. I taught them it was okay to pick your board up. I taught them it was okay to be silly. Others I taught how to ollie. And still others I taught how to simply balance and push. In Sabanagrande, the kids ended up building two different rails. It grew into something special. During my second year of service, we had two films nights where we watched *Dogtown and Z-Boys* and *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography*. If they remember me for anything in town, I hope that it's for skateboarding.

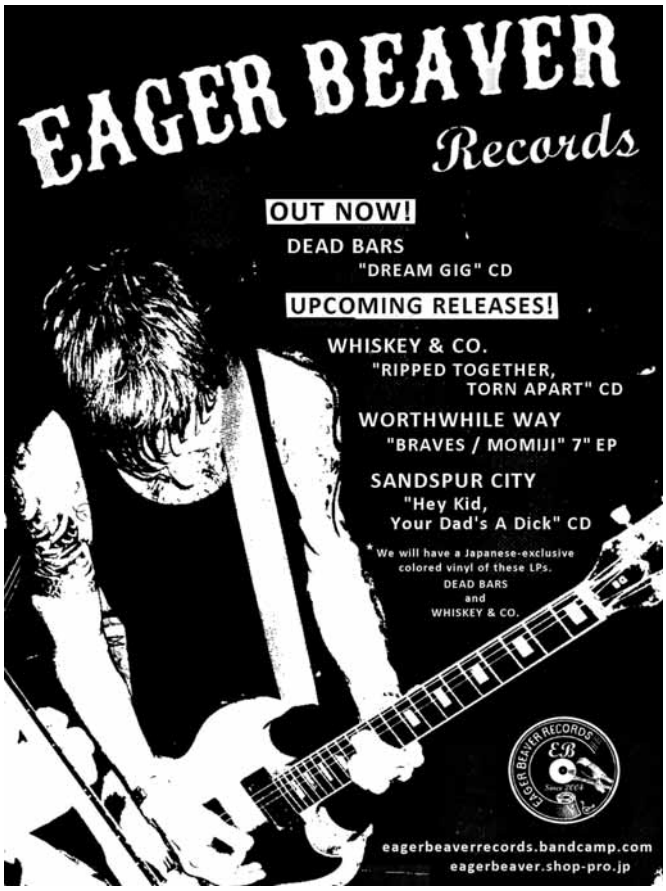
One of the main things about playing in punk bands, setting up shows, and going on tours is that you can rarely put that on a resume. It's often thankless work. You're lucky if you can break even. There's no financial gain, and yet those skills that I acquired navigating my DIY punk community for the last ten years translated to very real skills. I'm not afraid to call someone on the phone and ask for a favor. I was able to walk in to my mayor's office and tell him that I started a skateboarding group. I told him I wanted to show a documentary, and that I needed a room, a projector, a screen, and speakers. I have no shame asking for help. I don't take no for an answer, but I am flexible. I work with what I've got. One could argue that the Peace Corps trained me for these sorts of situations, but what makes each volunteer unique is the experience they bring with them into their service. In my case, I self-identify as a punk. It's part of my identity. It's who I am. It's a huge part of what I brought to my service. And I think this shaped my approach to how I handled things. I think it shaped the skate scene in our community.

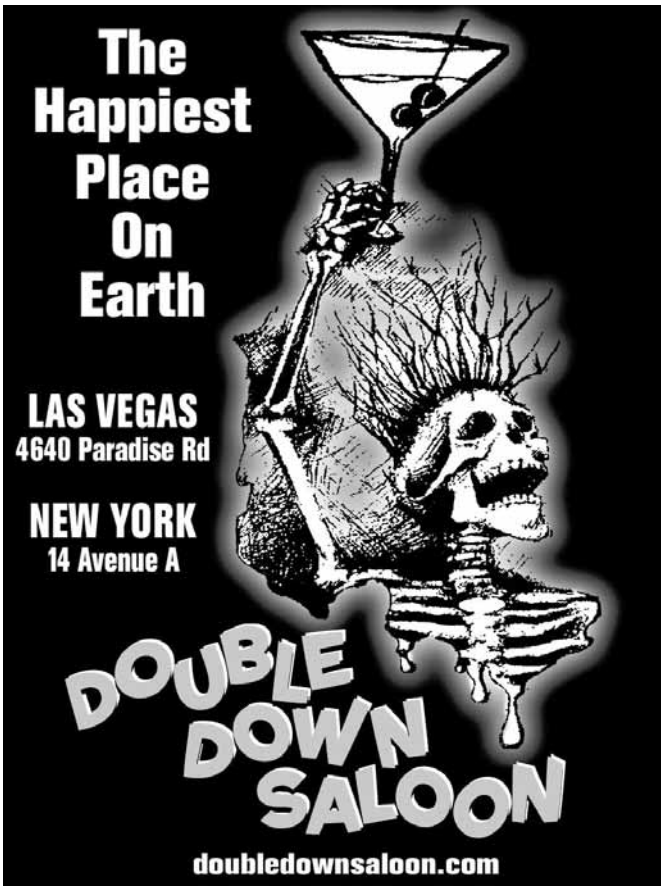
At the end of my first year of service I started dating another volunteer. I was lucky enough to fall in love. She became the best part about my service. I could write about what it's like to kiss someone under a mango tree while living on the Caribbean coast, but it's another thing to actually do that. I could write about the way the monarch butterflies walked me home from work, but it's another thing to actually live that. I could write about taking a motorcycle to go eat coconut rice at my favorite restaurant, but nothing will be the same as actually doing that. And I could major in creative writing, but I would never be able to describe the colors of the sunsets.



During my second year I got better at teaching English. I started working with the high school students in ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade. I taught them test taking strategies, reading comprehension skills, and we worked on vocabulary building exercises. My eleventh grade students improved their standardized test scores from the year before, and I felt really good about that. But teaching in the class came with its challenges.

You have to imagine that most American students can take four years of high school Spanish and graduate without knowing how to communicate. In most American public high schools when studying a foreign language, you have class for an hour a day, five days a week.





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One of my toughest challenges was having to face myself on a daily basis. I had to constantly question my feelings, attitudes, and prejudices.

In Colombia you only get two hours a week. So if we can't teach students a foreign language with all the money and resources we have in the United States, how does anyone realistically expect me to teach English in Colombia?

Not only that, but my students in Sabanagrande who were "good" at English took private lessons in Barranquilla on the weekends. They were good at English because their parents had the money to pay for private lessons. Therefore, most of the students who were "bad" at English weren't bad because they were dumb. They were bad because the system is corrupt and their families are poor.

The fact was, our students were not going to become fluent by the time we left. When we arrived in 2014, the Colombian government's goal was to have English bilingualism for all students by 2018. By the time we left in 2016, this goal of bilingualism had been pushed back to 2025. So, because most of my English teaching experience felt so slow, it was difficult to measure progress, and I found a lot of it unfulfilling.

I think this is what happens with a lot of grassroots work, though. It's sometimes really difficult to measure the day-to-day impact that you're making. Yet, it's crucial to take a step back and realize that there's a bigger picture here, and it has to start slow. You can rarely see the impact that your work is having on the community. That's what makes it special.

In Colombia, the classrooms were large. The resources were minimal. My Spanish was still developing. Classroom management was sometimes impossible, but I learned to love it. It was always difficult, but like most teaching situations there are always going to be moments that make it worth it. For me, it was when the idea of cognates clicked with my students. Cognates are words that look the same between two languages, which make it easy to guess their meaning. For example, music and *musica* are English and Spanish cognates. My students really ran with this idea and we made posters in all of their classrooms. Every time we would do a reading exercise,

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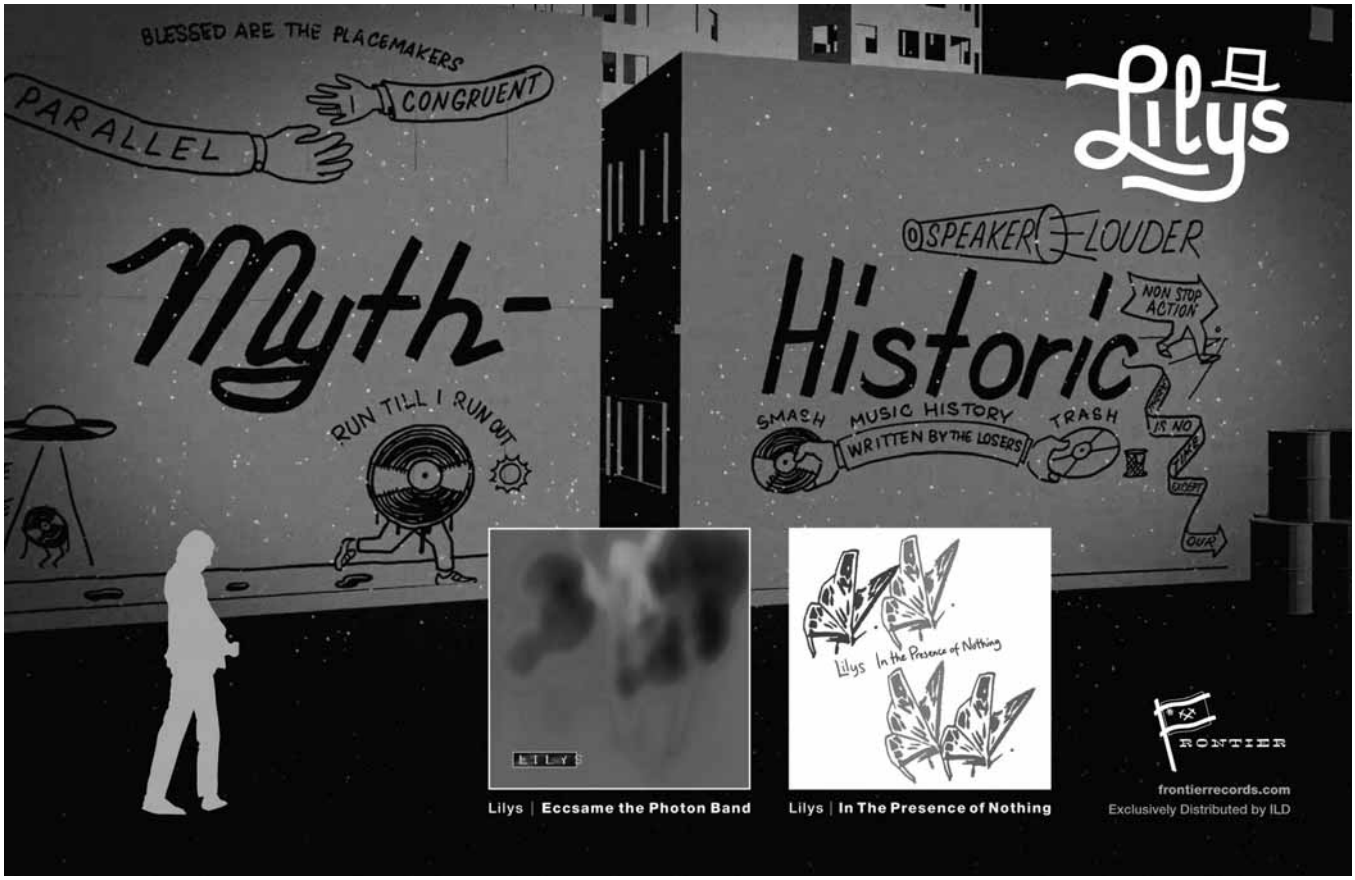

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we would identify the cognates. The posters grew and grew. I'd like to think that their vocabulary did too.

My older sister called me in September of 2015 to tell me she was pregnant. On May 15, 2016, she had her first child and my first nephew. I missed the birth.

On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen killed forty-nine people and wounded fifty-three others inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

On June 23, 2016, the Brexit referendum passed by 52%.

On July 26, 2016, Hillary Clinton became the Democratic nominee for president over Bernie Sanders.

On Sunday, October 2, 2016, the Colombia peace accords between F.A.R.C. (a guerrilla movement involved in the continuing Colombian armed conflict) and the Colombian government failed when 50.2% of voters rejected the accords. The outcome of the accords has risked prolonging a fifty-two-year war, which has killed over 220,000 people and displaced seven million more.

I finished my service at the end of October 2016 and traveled around Argentina and Chile for a few weeks. After twenty-seven months of living abroad, I left Colombia at the end of November. I got home two weeks after Donald Trump was announced the winner of the 2016 presidential election. I'm not sure what the future has in store, but I know that finishing my Peace Corps service was one of the most important things I've ever done.

Next month I'll be moving back up to Arcata, CA to finish my Masters degree in English at Humboldt State University. I won't be going alone, though. My girlfriend that served in Colombia with me will be coming along. We'll be moving into our first apartment together.

Nothing about Peace Corps service is easy. Sometimes your mom has neck surgery. Sometimes your dad has a stroke. Sometimes your parents buy a house in Delaware, and sometimes your sister has her first child. There are going to be a lot of things from home that will feel like they're dragging you back, but I know that after having finished I'm so happy I stuck it out. Because despite all of the horrible things that happened, when I reflect on my decision to stay I realized what I was looking for was change. I was hoping to change as a person, and I know that I did. I know that this experience changed me. I'm not the same person I was two years ago. If I had given up early and gone home, I'm afraid I might still be that person.

I joined the Peace Corps because I believed in their mission. I believed there was value in grassroots work. I believed there was value in working closely with a community to help realize its goals. I still do.

This experience has completely inspired me. I now understand I can move to another country and learn a new language and integrate into a new culture. I used to think that was something only certain people could do. I used to think certain people were more adept at learning a second language, and that I just wasn't one of those people.

I now understand when I need to come back home my family will still be there, and that my home will be wherever my family is. By staying in the Peace Corps, I have a much greater appreciation for my family. And that's something I learned from Colombians. I learned that from watching their everyday interactions. I learned that from living in a multigenerational household.

I have plans now to move to Budapest and learn Hungarian. It's in my five-year plan. I'm going to teach English there, and I'm not sure that would have ever happened had it not been for the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps will change your life in really amazing ways—in really unexpected ways.

A lot of people have written memoirs about their service in the Peace Corps, but I think the things that are most special about everyone's service are the things volunteers keep to themselves. The things they never share with anyone—their hopes, their dreams, and the things they fear while on a four-hour bus ride back to town.

If I had any advice for finishing Peace Corps service, it would be to find a way to feel fulfilled. Find something that feels meaningful because there are so many days when you will feel the opposite. For me it was teaching kids how to skateboard.

With that said, I think most people join for a mixture of selfish and selfless reasons. But after spending the last twenty-seven months

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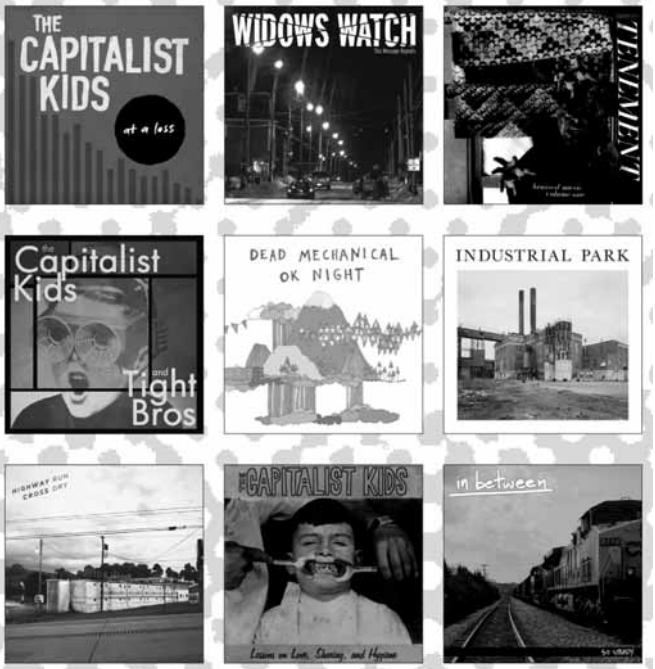

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SILVER #067; ISBN: 978-1-945509-12-4

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in Colombia and getting to meet so many other volunteers, I get the sense that many of those reasons are overwhelmingly selfless.

Part of what it meant to defy the notion of being an "Ugly American" was this idea of sending trained professionals to a country who were voluntarily willing to learn the language, learn about the culture, and offer support to local communities. Peace Corps is looking for volunteers who are willing to sacrifice their time, their relationships back home, and potentially their health to make a difference. Different volunteers navigate these challenges to varying degrees of success, but I think every volunteer who tries is doing more than someone who doesn't. I wasn't the best volunteer, but I know I made a difference on a personal level with a lot of people in my community. So much of our job is sharing our culture, and for me that meant sharing music and skateboarding. It gets said a lot that you always gain more than you give, and it's true. I walked away with a better understanding of not only Colombia and Colombians but of myself.

For further reading:
Books about the History of the Peace Corps:

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Peace Corps memoirs:

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps, Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York City: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

This piece is the recipient of Razorcake's first annual Chris Pepus Prize.

I wanted something bigger
than playing to ten people
in some Midwestern basement.

MIA I Photo by Claude Shade, 2014

Mia d'Bruzzi

(Frightwig, Mudwimin)

The Punk of a Thousand Faces

Interview: David Ensminger
Photos: David Ensminger, Bobby Castro, Claude Shade, Barry Barbour Duncan
Layout: Dylan Davis

Though most punk fans recognize Mia d'Bruzzi as a core member of Frightwig, a band whose noise, sarcasm, wonkiness, and in-your-face feminism helped shape a one-of-kind miasmic rock'n'roll, she has spent decades as a musical chameleon, living the DIY creed like few others. Mia has shifted musical duties with ease and artful deviance. Her time spent in Mudwimin—the churning, harrowing, distorted, grunge-meets-riot grrrl (think Babes In Toyland)—distinctly contrasts her nimble, jazz-blend musicality of Mama Mia. Plus, her constant acoustic busking at farmers markets is a roving counterpart to her role as recently added singer in the legendary Mutants and mentor to Sticky Situation, a fuzz-pop band with under-age panache carved in a homegrown school of rock that just released *Introduce the Moose*, with righteous catchy tunes like "Don't Judge Me!"

Meanwhile, Dizzy Twin is a joint effort with her multi-instrumental husband that showcases her post-genre, nuanced, silver-flowing, and swooning vocals. By combining punk's blueprint with her own unfettered dynamism, d'Bruzzi effortlessly weaves an intense, gobsmacking honesty and sincerity. And always restless, she embodies a hunger and pulsating purpose unleashed in never-dead Frightwig too, who continue their psych-punk agitation.

David: Punk has a long connection to kids—whether the Sex Pistols playing a fireman's benefit with kids galore, Jonathan Richman releasing his kids (or kids-esque) tunes like "I'm a Little Dinosaur" in 1977, and Paul Reuben's fantastical punk carnival *Pee-wee's Playhouse*. How has punk shaped your sense of parenting?

Mia: Punk has informed my parenting in that I strive to teach my kids to think for themselves and to disregard the status quo. I model a DIY ethic and have tried to support my kids in their efforts to make things happen from their own ideas and on their own terms. The advice, "It's better to apologize than to ask permission," has been used, although it's not always appropriate, and the fine line between that propriety is yet another parenting challenge.

David: Two concerns seem ever-present today. First, kids are being raised by the internet in an isolating way. Second, parents are being called the "helicopter generation" because they tend to hover over their children's lives. Have you coped with either or both of these?

Mia: Ah, the interwebs... my eleven-year-old son just explained to me that, "We are not the same!"—in regard to our respective view of screen time and of how much is appropriate. Personally, it just kills me that this whole generation is growing up with a significant portion of their lives lived in this tiny box of unreality. I feel that every hour they kill going clickety click is an hour of real life lost. I guess I'm old-fashioned, but the world is so utterly amazing, engaging, and alive—I just can't get the allure of "virtual" anything. I want the real thing!

I think there's probably going to be a very real consequence of this generation lacking social and personal skills when dealing with other actual, live people face-to-face. However, I'm facing the alternate lack of skills when I try to do the Facebook, Instagram, Twitter self-promotion hoo-ha… Different times [sighs].

Yeah, the "helicopter parents" versus the "free range parents." I've worked with children as a teacher of various subjects—art, music, horseback riding—and I can say with utter certainty that the helicopter parents are not doing their kids any favors. Many parents I've encountered seem very hung up on "achievement." They really don't want their kids making any mistakes. My view is that mistakes are how we learn, kids and adults alike. Trying to prevent them from happening by telling your kids how to do everything—every step of the way, or doing things for your kids—is actually robbing them of learning how to do life. It disempowers children and teaches them that they can't figure things out for themselves. It also teaches them that someone in authority knows best, and that they can't trust their own ideas. Helicopter parenting is definitely *not* punk rock.

David: For decades, adults have penned music for children, and even Charlie Sheen satirized this on *Two and a Half Men*. Why do you think children themselves should be making the music? Is this a way to empower kids, who are generally marginalized by American life?

Mia: Kids must be encouraged and enabled to create all different types of self-expression. Creative arts are so very marginalized and devalued in our culture. It's a very tough row to hoe in terms of earning a living, as well as garnering respect in the social makeup of our American society. It's not a "real" job, it doesn't pay "real" wages, and it's not regarded as "real" work—and believe me, it is! When kids themselves write the songs, they say what is important to them, not what they think their teacher, parents, or other authority figures want them to say.

It's a very powerful, and telling, message about their interior lives and values. In my experience, it takes a bit of convincing to get them to understand that I'm not going to tell them what to write about: this is not an assignment to be correctly answered. I want them to write about something that matters to them, not something that matters to me. Once they get started with this new idea of creativity, they usually run with it and come up with lots of material—loads of things they want to say. It's important that they understand that they can say negative stuff too, without any fear of disapproval or punishment. I try to teach that, actually, writing songs and singing about it is the perfect place to put all these feelings … Hello, the blues! Hello, punk rock!

David: You told me you act as a mentor, and rock camps of all types are blossoming. Is that your model, or do you bring something different to the table when working with Sticky Situation?

Mia: I have never worked in a rock camp, but I've heard wonderful things about many of them, and I have worked with children who have gotten their start playing through them. I think it's certainly an idea whose time has come, and I applaud their ability to organize and offer the classes on a large scale. The work I do with Sticky Situation is probably similar, but I don't really know because I've never sat in on a class at a rock camp.

With Sticky, I work with the kids wherever they're at in their creative development and level of instrumental expertise. I encourage them to play all the different instruments, and they can switch from song to song if they desire. I try to have them lead where they want the band to go and then support them in getting there. As they get older, I'm trying to have them run their own practices more and more. But they are in a stage where they will fight and fight for leadership power, just like an adult band, so I must keep the peace and keep them actually playing. "Too much talk, not enough rock!" is basically my line lately. Playing music teaches people so many important skills and develops a person on so many levels. I am all for anything that multiplies this phenomena throughout humanity!

David: Dizzy Twin seems like a rather sharp departure from Frightwig—less feral, noisy, and psych-punk. For me, it seems to bridge the music of PJ Harvey and prog/art metal like A Perfect Circle, especially on tunes like "Kaleidoscope" and "Glamour of Evil." What influences came to the fore when you began shaping the tunes?

Mia: Dizzy Twin is a studio project. The songs that ended up on this album went through so many forms and phases that it's difficult to pin down how they came to existence at all. This album was a very difficult birth: we had to cut three songs because they didn't work with the other ones, and the songs that made it onto the LP are weird together too.

I wrote most of the lyrics in a kind of a trance, with my conscious intellect kind of turned down so that the unseen and unsaid world could percolate up. I made a good try at shutting up my yapping critic and just letting the joy and play of words bubble up. That said, the final track is a very deliberate murder ballad, which makes me feel vindicated each and every time I sing it.

David: Why is that?

Mia: What could be better than writing and singing a rape revenge murder ballad when you're in the mood for some vindication? One gets to re-live the justice over and over again.

David: I was a bit surprised to discover you only sang on the album—and your husband covered all the music. Did this allow you to really focus? Or after decades of playing guitar, did you want to shift and leave guitar to busking sessions?

Mia: That's a very perceptive observation. I do play guitar for so many hours a week, and I do still enjoy it very much. My Taylor is my very best friend; however, I've gotten way into singing the last few years, and it's truly a treat for me to just get to focus on that. I am able to physically express much more freely what I'm singing without being stuck to my pedal board. Also, I'm somewhat

MIA | Photo by Barry Barbour Duncan, 2015

What could be better than writing and singing a rape revenge murder ballad when you're in the mood for some vindication?

FRIGHTWIG | Photo by Bobby Castro, 1984

I've always been terrible at "building a career," at creating a "brand," and at any kind of cohesive self-promotion.

limited as a guitar player. I don't feel I would have added anything guitar-wise to the Dizzy Twin album.

David: Why did you call it Dizzy Twin, and not another album via Mama Mia d'Bruzzi, which illustrated your seminal ability to fuse jazz, blues, and contemporary rock with ease and aplomb? "The Root Canal Song" from those sessions seems in the same vein as Dizzy Twin.

Mia: We are flighty, easily distracted, and full of beginnings. I've always been terrible at "building a career," at creating a "brand," and at any kind of cohesive self-promotion. Calling this project Mama Mia d'Bruzzi didn't make sense. My husband and I were doing a band called Gone To Ground, which, after a couple of EPs and lots of poorly attended weeknight headlining shows, kind became a chore. We created Dizzy Twin as a collaboration of all the things we loved—writing together, recording, conceptualizing—without the stuff that was dragging us down—endless unsatisfying practices, stupid-loud volumes resulting in vocal damage, and drummer issues. Paul Simmans knows exactly what he wants to hear, he likes having control over what gets played, and he is an exacting and astute engineer and producer. Dizzy Twin is his vision musically, and I learn so much each time we work together.

David: The cover art, a 1980's piece by Winston Smith, seems perfect—it captures the fragmentary, cryptic, poetic ethereality of the record. Was that something you discovered in his archives, or was it re-purposed from a project you had in the 1980s?

Mia: Winston is an old and treasured friend whom I've known from the earliest days of Frightwig. We twisted in the wind trying to find the right artwork for this album for ages. That's one of the reasons it took so long to come out. We have a big, framed picture of Winston's "The Money Tree" hanging up in our apartment, but I never even thought to ask him if he would do our cover, until my husband came up with the idea out of nowhere. Best idea ever. Winston offered to generate something new for us, but he also let us look at his archives. Once I saw "Venus Envy," I knew it was the one. One thing I found interesting was that Winston wanted to hear the album before he agreed to do the artwork, and once he heard it, he wanted all the lyrics, so he could really know what the album was about.

David: Since Frightwig has returned with the "War on Women" single and *Hit Return* EP, a whole new generation has gravitated to you—controversial comedian Margaret Cho in particular. Is the link between punk and comedians something often missed by writers and historians? For instance, MDC once played a huge gig in a San Francisco park with Whoopi Goldberg.

Mia: I think we are all fighting the same fight, but with slightly different weapons. I have a *huuuuge* respect and appreciation for comedians. They are so smart! I got to work a bit with Margaret Cho doing a busking project to benefit the homeless called #BeRobin. She came up with the idea of staging these big busking events and giving the money raised directly to homeless people. We did a bunch of these around Christmas time in San Francisco a couple of years ago, and a few since in other towns. They were invariably a huge fiasco, with various famous comedians and musicians turning up to do a bit or song.

We would have free hot food, clothing, haircuts, and sometimes the shower bus Lava Mae (lavamae.org) would show up and homeless people would get some food, a shower, a haircut, a tent, and some hygiene supplies, and a show. I will never forget Margaret doing a striptease on the street and handing out the cash she had stashed in her underwear to all the homeless folks. Best thing I've ever seen in my life! Margaret is actually quite a good guitar player, and she writes some fantastic and hilarious songs. There's an award-winning documentary about the project called *#BeRobin: The Movie* by Boiling Frog Entertainment.

David: I never realized you played with Fabulous Disaster, whose Dickies-style—short, sharp, melodic—template must have seemed like some of the straightest punk you ever played. Did you thrive with them, or was it a bit against your musical grain?

FRIGHTWIG I Photo by David Ensminger, 2013

Mia: Oh my gosh, playing with Fabulous Disaster was so much fun! They do these super well-written pop punk songs, which are a guitar player's equivalent to, I dunno, fast, fun, easy sex! Just getting to rock the fuck out with their powerhouse of a drummer Sally Gillespie was one of the highlights of my life. I played second guitar with them in San Francisco around 1997–1998 and then played bass on their first European tour in 1999. I love all those gals, and I really loved playing with them.

David: Though riot grrrl is very compelling and totally significant, I also feel that writers have ignored many of the other bands during the same period, including Mudwimin. Your songs like "Bodies" seem so prescient—all about mind, body, control, transfiguration, and metamorphosis. Did you ever feel like the band struggled in the margins, despite getting great press in places like *Puncture*?

Mia: The Mudwimin defined struggling in the margins, if by "margins" you mean the muddy ditch on the side of the interstate frontage road where we languished perpetually touring across the country in a mechanically disintegrating van lacking a heater before cell phones were universal, all while gradually poisoning ourselves with late night pizza, regional beer, and revolutionary banter. Ah, such good times!

David: Now, I might be wrong, but did you first play drums for them, circa 1989, then switch to bass, then by the time you recorded *Mysteries of Inner Beauty*, you played nearly everything? How did that happen?

Mia: Mudwimin were sooooo creative! We really didn't limit ourselves to any particular instrument, and we were all primitively musical enough to switch around and pull it off. I played a lot of bass in Mudwimin, but also played guitar, drums, and sang. Our set had a dynamic feel to it as a result of the different players playing different instruments.

David: Sonically speaking, the band seemed similar to Frightwig—it festered some Helios Creed guitar weirdness, sludgy rhythms ("Cow for You"), and dark atmospherics (like "Cloud Rodeo"); in fact, Frightwig and Mudwimin both played "Cow for You." How would you describe the difference between bands?

Mia: Frightwig has always had this weird synergy between the three core members. We used to joke that, combined, we made up the perfect woman: Deanna had the tits, Cecilia had the legs, and I had the ass. Perfect. We each of us were never virtuosic players, but together we did this thing that had a life of its own.

Mudwimin were more musically inventive, and we were somehow freer to create weirder music. Neither band was ever concerned with musical correctness, although some in each band had formal training. Some of us never knew enough about theory to feel any constraints or propriety at all.

David: Did the democratic nature of Mudwimin lead to projects like Mama Mia, as in gave you the confidence to try all sorts of genres and styles?

Mia: Yes, we never worried about doing it wrong or making mistakes, in either Frightwig or the Mudwimin. We call the inexplicable allure of Frightwig "The Mistake Mystique." I will happily fuck up any genre of music. I love them all!

David: You've been singing in the Mutants as well?

Mia: I guess I've been playing with them for about a year and a half. I do it in tribute to the original girl singers Sally Webster and Sue White, who are not interested in doing it any more. The Mutants were my favorite band when I moved to San Francisco when I was sixteen in 1980. Well, they were tied with Flipper as my faves. The Mutants write great songs, and it's been *sooo* much super-fun playing with them.

David: Do you think the music you made, and have continued to make, branching out in different directions and styles, could have gestated anywhere besides San Francisco, or is the city integral to the spirit of you?

Mia: Oh, geez. I have a very fraught relationship with San Francisco right now. I've been here, off and on, since 1980, and I feel, by turns, birthed, imprisoned, liberated, protected, smothered, buried, haunted, healed, burned, and reborn by this town. I have tried to escape many times, but like in the *Godfather Part 2*, "Every time I try to get out, it pulls me back in." I have recently reconciled that I will probably die here, and I'm getting to be okay with that.

It's changed a great deal with the impact of the sheer volume of funny money the tech sector has brought in, and it's no longer the nurturing haven to freaks that it has historically been. I'm really glad I remember it the way it was, and I do believe that *that* San Francisco was absolutely instrumental with bringing the spirits of Frightwig and the Mudwimin into flesh, as well as a host of other San Francisco bands. Who I am now, and what I do, is also a product of what San Francisco has become: I play music for money, Christ! Who'da thunk it?

I played a fabulous gig yesterday at a historic San Francisco strip club called The Condor. So weird, because it's up in North Beach a block away from where the Mabuhay Gardens was thirty-eight years ago—the place I got my first punk rock revelation. And there I was yesterday playing music at a strip club and making tourists dance and holler for more.

mamamiadbruzzi.com

PHOTO BY BRETT ESSLER

MIKEY ERG

INTERVIEW BY MIKE FALOON
PHOTOS BY BRETT ESSLER
AND MARC GAERTNER
TRANSCRIBED BY MADELINE BRIDENBAUGH
LAYOUT BY LAUREN MEASURE

Mike Yannich was a pivotal part of The Ergs! for the better part of a decade. He sang, played drums, and wrote many of the band's heart-wrenching, self-effacing pop punk classics. He was among the DIY underground's most prolific writers. Then he wasn't. The band broke up in 2008 and new Mikey Erg songs faded from the landscape. He performed solo shows and played with countless other bands, but his songwriting went into hibernation.

Fast forward to 2016, and Mike has re-emerged with the release of Tentative Decisions, his first solo record, marking the full-force return of his distinctively personal songs. He's never preached from on high nor wallowed in the depths of self pity. His lyrical stance is eye to eye with the listener, a conversation among equals. Here's another one about a time that hurt like hell. This may be my song, but it's our story; we've all been there. Filled with energy, dynamics, and first-listen hooks, his songs can appeal to a teenager going through their first break up, as well as the geezer wading through the demise of a decades-long relationship.

Mikey Erg and I have known each other for years but it'd been ages since we spoke at length. We met up on a sweltering summer night and talked over drinks, dinner, a spontaneous show across town, and then another round of drinks for good measure.

Mike: We've got some catching up to do. The last time we saw each other on a regular basis these things were true: you were a big *Simpsons* fan, collecting all of the DVDs.
Erg: Yeah.
Mike: Chicken nuggets were a regular dining favorite.
Erg: Loved 'em.
Mike: And you worked at the grocery store in between tours.
Erg: I worked at a grocery store and chicken nuggets was true up until about five years ago. The first time I went to Europe I went with nothing, a dollar to my name. You get fed every night but it's just whatever they give you. It's usually a giant pot of vegan goulash, which now I look forward to. Then, I was just like, "Ugh, no."

I don't know what I did the first day. The second day we played this festival in the Czech Republic and we got food tickets, so I think I ate six portions of french fries. I was in hog heaven. It was awesome. By the third day I was like, "Okay, I have to eat whatever this is." Took the scary first bite and was like, "This is amazing!" And every night I had these great curries and stews.

As soon as I got home, I decided I was not going to be afraid of food anymore. I literally was eating McDonald's three times a day up until I was almost thirty. It's crazy to think about that now. I grew up in a household where I was pretty much fending for myself and I didn't really know how to cook anything. Going on tour has always been, "Oh, I gotta go to Amoeba (Records) or I gotta go to this record store." Now it's like, "I gotta go to Amoeba *and* I gotta go to this Thai restaurant that I heard so much about."
Mike: You've said that for a long time music was the only thing that you were interested in. I've wondered to what extent that was an exaggeration and if it's sustainable. If you have one thing, might it wither away at some point?
Erg: For most of my life, and until very recently—maybe my late twenties—music was literally the only thing I cared about, and to a detriment to myself. I spent my early years not paying attention to anything that wasn't music. I remember getting called on in high school math class. It was some sort of problem involving a deck of cards and I didn't know how many cards were in a deck. Why would I know that? I didn't play cards, I didn't care. I didn't understand why it was so weird that I didn't know that.

All through middle school and high school I'd just go through the motions and get home and pull out my records. I did not care about anything that wasn't music. My mom tells me that I learned how to read because I would force myself to read liner notes on the backs of albums and read along with the lyrics. I don't think that I had the capacity to do that, but I think some of that must have stuck. I'd only watch movies that were about

my favorite musicians, and I was into certain comedies. Then a few years ago I got super into film and watching a lot of art house and foreign stuff.

Mike: It's been ten years since you last released an album of original material. When I was a kid, ten years between records seemed like an eternity. Hell, it was only eight years between the second and third Boston albums, which was the classic rock benchmark for gaps between albums. You topped Boston in that category, and we have your friend Anika Pyle to thank for entering into a songwriting pact with you. She couldn't have been the first person who tried to nudge you into writing songs during that time.

Erg: No, absolutely not. But she was the first person that wasn't just like, "Make a fucking record already, asshole." It was more like, "Send me a song. I know you can do it. Send me a song a week."

Mike: It was a tree, not a forest.

Erg: Yeah, it wasn't just someone yelling at me to write. I was just, "I'll do it when I'm ready. I just don't think I'm ready right now." I needed a break after the Ergs! And she used the phrase, "It's a safe space." She said, "I'm not going to make fun of you because you wrote a shitty song. Send me a song." It was comforting. Instead of just writing a song and being like, "This sucks," and not finishing it or just forgetting about it, I had an obligation to send it to someone. I didn't want to let her down. There are plenty of weeks that I only have a verse—and eventually it dropped off—but for a while it was at a clip. Songs that I would have thrown away if I didn't have someone to bounce them off of. In my mind, she thought they were good. Eventually I sent them all to Jeff Rosenstock, who produced the record (*Tentative Decisions*).

Mike: In the same form that you sent them to Anika?

Erg: Yeah, and he was like, "These are great. We have an album. Let's go." I took all the songs that I had, demoed them all in one sitting at a friend's house, just guitar and vocals, and made an order out of them. It immediately felt right. It felt like an album, like the album that I wanted to make for ten years or whatever. [laughs]

Mike: When you got to that point was there a moment of relief? Or did that come on gradually?

Erg: There was definitely a moment. I was doing a temp job downtown in the financial district and I remember walking out of the Bowling Green subway station. The second to last song was on and I was like, "This might be really good."

Mike: There's so much heartache in your songs. It seems that the more you open up the personal the lyrics and the delivery, more people are drawn in.

Erg: I always go back to this quote in the Merge book (*Our Noise: The Story of Merge Records*). There's a quote from Mac from Superchunk paraphrasing Sammy Hagar. I believe he says, "I can't believe I'm quoting Sammy Hagar." But apparently, Sammy Hagar said, "That girl that broke up with you in high school—you have material for the rest of your life." That's pretty much anything I write at this point, just thinking back to old heartbreak. If you can get yourself back into this mindset where you were really heartbroken, and make that personal.

I SPENT MY EARLY YEARS NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO ANYTHING THAT WASN'T MUSIC. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW MANY CARDS WERE IN A DECK. WHY WOULD I KNOW THAT? I DIDN'T PLAY CARDS, I DIDN'T CARE.

Mike: I put you in a category with people like Chris Gethard and Marc Maron. The more they delve into something, the less filtered it is, the more it resonates. It sounds like you've got a different take on that, like it doesn't have to be the here-and-now version of those experiences.

Erg: I think about a situation I didn't write about before and the feelings are still there. But that's what I need to do because I have been in a relationship for the last five years.

Mike: At their worst, pop punk lyrics are like arrested development—adults trying to write like they're kids—and your stuff never comes across that way.

Erg: Even when I was younger I didn't want to write, "You didn't take me to prom." or "You broke my heart at the sweet shop, baby." That didn't happen to me. I like doing something a little different. There's no better feeling than when you hear a song that's exactly what you're feeling.

Mike: Was there a certain time when you were trying to write songs but they weren't sticking? Going through a period where someone like XTC's Andy Partridge was more intimidating than inspiring?

Erg: Absolutely. I went through a seven-to-ten-month period where I only listened to XTC and convinced myself—this is kind of between *dorkrockcorkrod* and *Upstairs/Downstairs* in the Ergs! lexicon—he's already done it all.

Mike: So why bother?

Erg: Yeah. You don't get any better than (XTC's "When You're Near Me I Have Difficulty), "When you're near me I have difficulty concentrating/ when you're near me I have difficulty res-pi-rating." [laughs] "When you're near me I have difficultly standing upright/ when you're near me I have difficulty sleeping at night." There have definitely been times where I've been listening to stuff and I was just like, "Well. There's no point in me doing this. There are better people doing this."

Mike: Meanwhile, you were playing in a lot of bands.

Erg: Yeah, I was.

Mike: Looking back, were the other bands more of a help because they kept you active—they kept you involved in punk rock musically and socially—or a hindrance because they kept you from writing?

Erg: I needed to be a part of it, a part of the thing, but I didn't want to write. I didn't want to write after The Ergs! broke up but it was almost like a blessing in disguise. Because, honestly, *Upstairs/Downstairs* was kind of disliked when it came out.

Mike: It didn't feel like it received the same embrace?

Erg: No, not at all. Everything (for the Ergs!) was positive up until that point—aside from a review here or there. I was like, "Well, I let everybody down. Maybe I can't do this. That was one thing I thought I was any good at and maybe I'm not."

Mike: Looking back, was the criticism of *Upstairs* as intense as you perceived it?

Erg: I suppose it probably wasn't that awful. It was early on in the whole "everyone's on the internet and you can read everyone's opinions on everything." I remember it got

PHOTO BY MARC GAERTNER

MY MOM TELLS ME THAT I LEARNED HOW TO READ BECAUSE I WOULD FORCE MYSELF TO READ LINER NOTES ON THE BACKS OF ALBUMS.

just completely slammed on the Knock Knock (Records) message board and I was just taking all those opinions as gospel. I remember a lot of places that used to praise us giving it mediocre reviews, that it wasn't nearly as good as *dorkrockcorkrod,* which I don't think is true. *dorkrock* is a band still trying to figure themselves out. I think *Upstairs/Downstairs* is a way more confident record. *Upstairs* came out in May 2007 and then we broke up in late 2008. I maybe wrote one song in that time. I was not writing and I think that kind of contributed to us breaking up. Not only did Jeff not want to do it anymore but we were just stagnant. We didn't need to practice the set, so we didn't practice. Three years before that we would practice after work in Joe's basement for hours on end.

Mike: Because you had new stuff.

Erg: I always had new stuff and Jeff always had new stuff and Joe always had new stuff, and you know, "Let's learn *Never Mind the Bollocks* tonight." Or, "Let's start learning *Double Nickels on the Dime."* We had this crazy repertoire of all these weird covers because we just played all the time. That totally stopped and a lot was me not having anything to bring to the table. I do equate it to getting negative attention from *Upstairs/Downstairs*. It's totally different than *dorkrockcorkrod*, but I didn't take criticism well. Then once The Ergs! broke up I was just like, "Cool, I'm just going to play everybody else's music. Whatever. I'm going to play drums until I can't play drums anymore. I'm going to keep myself on the road."

Mike: Once I started losing track of how many bands you were playing in, I thought we should commission a "How many bands is Mikey currently in?" clock, like the national debt clock on Sixth Avenue. That way people don't need to ask you how many bands you're playing with. We can just reference the clock. Do you write when you're on tour?

Erg: No. The way I write is to sit on the couch at night and hash out a song. I don't have books of lyrics that I refer to. I get a burst of an idea and I have the guitar in hand. This album could have happened a couple years earlier if I wasn't on the road all the time. But I couldn't force it. I mean, sometimes you listen to a record and you can tell.

Mike: You are talking to someone who owns the Moody Blues' *Octave*. I know what recorded fatigue sounds like. [laughs]

ALL I WANTED WAS RECORDS. AND I WAS NOT ALLOWED TO PLAY THEM BEFORE SEVEN AM OR ELSE MY MOM WOULD GET MAD.

Erg: There are certain things you can tell that they just weren't in it at that point. I don't want to make a record like that, especially coming out of this band that was kind of liked by people. There was a fear, like The Ergs! is this huge thing and I don't want to let people down.

Mike: You were talking about how music was your sole interest for a long time. To what extent was that social? Were you the sort of kid who was pulling aside other kids at school, like, "Hey, check this out"—extroverted that way or home by yourself, more introverted?

Erg: I was pretty introverted, but I was also the kid who everybody knew they could get a tape of a new Nirvana record from. I was going to have it the day it came out so, "Yo, can I get a tape of that?" I devoured whatever I could get my hands on. Every weekend we'd go to my grandparents' house and we'd go to the mall and they let me loose in the record store. I was a spoiled little kid. We would listen to American Top 40 on the way and I'd be, "I like this." I was only four years old. I like El De Barge "Rhythm of the Night." "This is a good song, I want this."

Mike: Instead of candy or video games…

Erg: All I wanted was records. And I was not allowed to play them before seven AM or else my mom would get mad. [laughs] On my little Fisher Price record player.

Mike: Which implies that you would have been up much earlier listening to music, given the choice.

Erg: It took two or three times of me getting up at four AM and blasting the record player for her to be like, "No. That's not happening." [laughs]

Mike: Your dad had a recording studio for a long time. Was your mom a performer or musician?

Erg: No, not at all.

Mike: Even a listener?

Erg: Not really. I remember she had Barry Manilow records, and she liked '50s doo-wop. But when we'd go to my grandparents' house on these early trips, my grandmother would haul out my mom's old Beatles 45s and we'd listen to those.

Mike: Listening to your mom's records but not through her?

Erg: She was already long past that stuff. I'm sure that the musical blood in my body is from my dad. He was a drummer and he owned a recording studio. He was at the studio all day and then played in his band at night, so I feel like I didn't really see him all that much until I was a little older, like six or seven. Then he really started schooling me on Motown, James Brown, old soul, old jazz. He would play me Dave Brubeck's *Time Out* and say, "Mike this is one of my very important records." He had (the Ramones') *Rocket to Russia*. He was friends with Tony Bongiovi (*Rocket to Russia*'s co-producer) at the time it was made and, apparently, my dad was there when they mixed it. He always told me it was so loud he couldn't stand in the room while they were mixing it. I had access to cool, weird records.

Mike: I recall a time when you were living with your mom and another time when you were living with your dad and working at his studio. This is a sweeping generalization, but is there anything to the theory that your dad provided more professional support and your mom provided more personal support?

Erg: Yeah, kind of. My parents separated when I was twelve. I remember choosing to live with my dad because my mom was moving and my dad was staying.

Mike: To a different state?

Erg: No, the next town over. I would have had to go to a different school. It's hard enough for me to make friends. I wanted to keep the ones that I had and stay in that school. That was the main reason I stayed where I was. He was playing music all night and had his job during the day. I would work with him during the day but then I'd go back home.

Mike: You were already helping in the studio at that age?

Erg: I was working for him, quote-unquote, since I was twelve or thirteen, for pocket change. Just doing little menial shit around the studio. It was rad. At that point, all I wanted to do was touch the Ampex tape machine and the Soundcraft board. I was at a playground that was a recording studio. I would work with him but then I'd go home and I would spend my nights sitting at home listening to records. I was on my own for a lot of my childhood. My dad was busy working.

Mike: He was in a working band.

Erg: Every night. Then the studio all day. It was a pretty crazy round-the-clock thing, and to pay the bills he had to. Neither of them made crazy money. I spent a lot of time alone, which I definitely put with the reason that I didn't know how to feed myself until later in life. There were certain things that were weird about my childhood.

Mike: But at the same time, I imagine you became more self-reliant.

Erg: Totally. I didn't need to have people do things for me. I could come and go as I pleased. Definitely helped in that respect, but I didn't know how to do certain things. I could go to a show and come home at two in the morning on a school night and no one cared. But I always got up and went to school. I wasn't rebellious. They knew they could trust me. They knew that even if I was out I would get up and go to school. I wasn't great at it but I showed up. Every job I've had, I'm not good but I'll get there ten minutes early and I'll leave twenty minutes late. I'm reliable. That is probably why I play with seventeen million bands. They know. A band can call me up and say, "We're screwed. We're playing this fest next week and our drummer can't do it. Can you learn the songs?" I'll show up and I'll know the songs.

Mike: As you went from being a kid who had to be told "no music before seven" to being a very active performer, how did you parents' view of your music evolve, or has it?

Erg: When I first started playing in punk bands, my dad didn't understand. He was in cover bands his whole life and supported his family doing that. I'd come home from a two-month tour with zero dollars in my pocket. I am playing original music. You don't make money playing original punk music. My dad never understood how I wasn't making money from it. It's only very recently, where I'm on television, that they're like, "Look at him, he's on television. On a channel I can actually tune into."

Mike: With *The Chris Gethard Show*?

Erg: With the Gethard show. That was the turning point. And when my parents both got on Facebook and they'd see a picture of me playing to five hundred people at Fest. "Oh, he must be doing all right." Or the point that I am posting from Australia. My mom's like, "They brought him out to Australia, that's cool. He must be doing something right." As long as I'm doing what I want to do, they're happy.

Mike: There was a petition written on your behalf to help you get the drumming gig with Against Me!.

Erg: That was hilarious. Punknews wrote me and was like, "Are you okay with this? Does this make you uncomfortable?" Like, "Yeah, I'll totally do it." And then I was on tour in Richmond, Virginia. I get off stage

PHOTO BY MARC GAERTNER

I DIDN'T WANT TO WRITE AFTER THE ERGS! BROKE UP BUT IT WAS ALMOST LIKE A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.

PHOTO BY MARC GAERTNER

I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT MOMENT JUST SITTING THERE IN THE STUDIO, HEADPHONES ON, THIS VOICE THAT I HAD BEEN LISTENING TO FOR YEARS PUMPING INTO MY HEADPHONES BUT NOT BECAUSE I JUST PUT MY IPOD ON.

and look at my phone and there's a text from a number I don't know. "Hey Mikey, this is Laura Jane Grace, how you doing? We have a drummer, but I see you are touring through St. Augustine. Let's hang out." We get to St. Augustine early because the rest of my band had friends they wanted to hang out with and I was like, "I guess I'm going to do this Laura Jane Grace thing."

We hung out and listened to some music. Eventually, she was like, "Do you want to go to my studio and jam on some new demos? I wrote this song last night I really want to play it with someone." I was like, "Absolutely, let's do that." We go to the studio and the song is "Fuck My Life 666," which is the first single off of the *Transgender Dysphoria Blues* album. She was like, "I wrote this last night." I'll never forget that moment just sitting there in the studio, headphones on, this voice that I had been listening to for years pumping into my headphones but not because I just put my iPod on. And I'm hearing a new song and the whole thing was very, very strange. It was amazing. We did four demos of songs. Two of them made that record and two of them are totally unreleased. Maybe someday those recordings will come out.

Mike: What was it like visiting the SST warehouse?

Erg: When Jeff (Schroeck) and I started hanging out together, we were discovering SST at the same time. He was pretty active in ordering stuff from SST. I remember he made me the tape of *Double Nickels on the Dime* that got me into that record. Eventually

we came into this decision: we were going to own the complete SST catalog, which was a daunting task. I mean, at that point it was 300-something records.

Mike: It's qualitatively daunting as well. There were some turds in that punch bowl.

Erg: A lot of turds in that punch bowl. A lot of crazy shit that no one's talking about, like the Stains album, which is like SST 10 or something. Never got reissued on anything other than the original LP. It's an eight-song EP and it's incredible. Like Ron Reyes-era Black Flag, just snotty punk rock. Probably my favorite SST release. The Canadian Subhumans did a record on SST that, bar none, is their best record. The Dicks record.

All these records that don't really get attention because they aren't the Minutemen, Hüsker Dü, Black Flag. What is the name of the band? Angst. They have a record, *Lite Life*. Incredible pop music. And *Mystery Spot.* Great records that I never would have known about if I hadn't started this SST obsession with Jeff. Then in 2003, Black Flag announces they're going to play *First Four Years* live at the Palladium in L.A. This is February when they announce it. The show's not until September. We immediately buy plane tickets and decide to fly into Long Beach because that's where SST is.

Mike: How do you know SST's street location versus their PO box?

Erg: We thought we'd figure it out. I think it was cheaper to fly into Long Beach anyway. We get to Long Beach, touch down, pull out our phones and call SST. This dude answers the phone and we're like, "We are huge fans. We have every record you have ever put out. We are here for the Black Flag show. We want to see if we can check out the warehouse." The guy is like, "Sure, come on down."

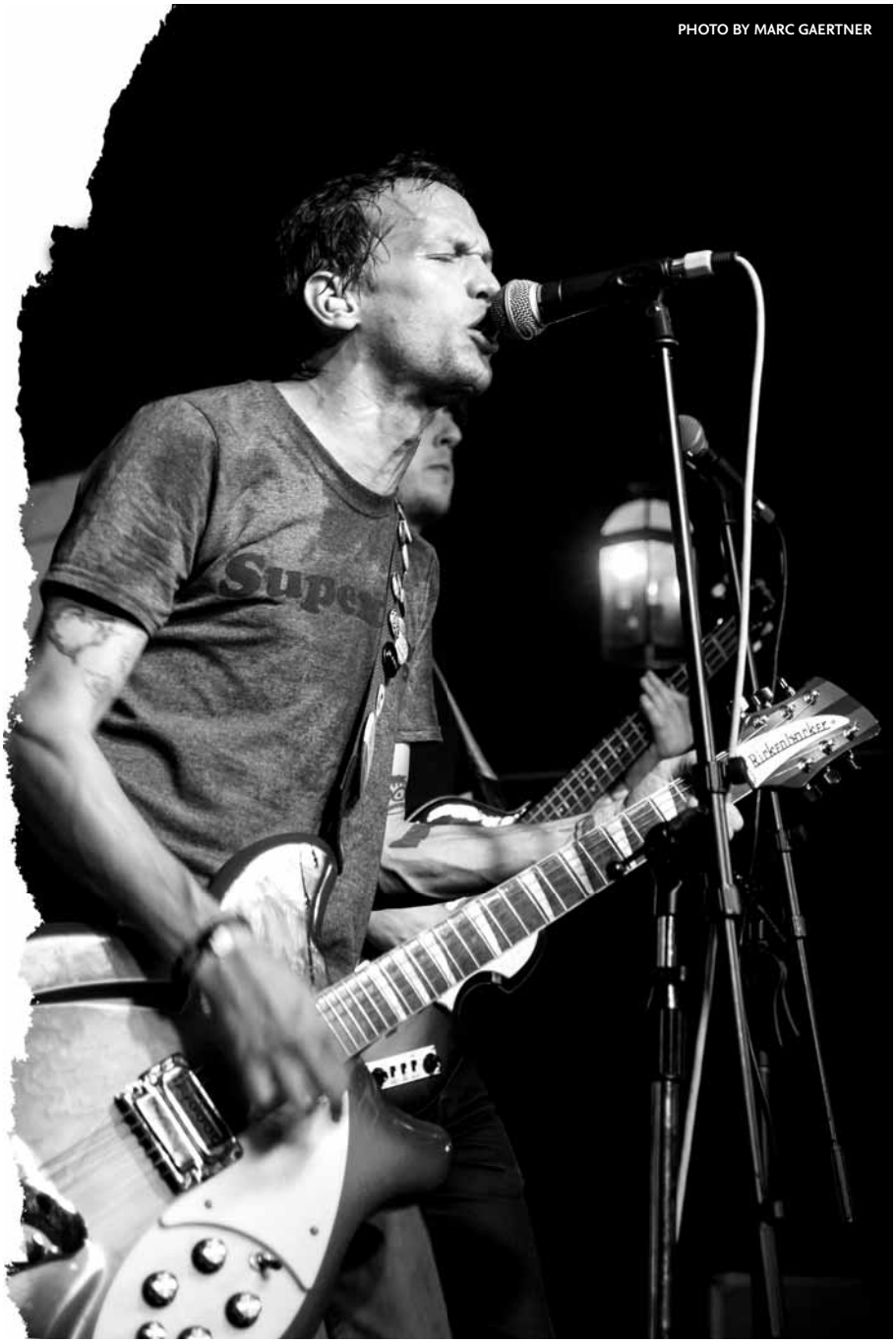
We go there, it was a two-minute drive, knock on the door. He opens the door like, "Hey, how you doing?" We're hanging out and he points to a door, "They are practicing right now." It's dead silence in there. I was ready to believe it, because they (Black Flag) want to be killer for their show. Awesome. He takes us back. Gigantic, gymnasium-sized warehouse. There's boxes and boxes. It totally looks like a functional record label warehouse, but they still had all the stuff we know they're not allowed to sell anymore. The Negativland stuff, the Sonic Youth stuff, stuff that they'd gotten sued over, and they were like, "You can have it." Gave us tons of stuff. We bought a lot of stuff, too, but anything they weren't allowed to sell they just gave us. I completed my Negativland cassette collection because that was the only stuff I didn't have. Or the weird cassettes that SST had put out in the mid-'80s. Oh, this shirt was misprinted—the Jealous Again shirt—but in reverse screen-print. They were so cool to us, let us look at everything. We saw these double door-sized manila envelopes. "What is that?" He's like, "Oh check this out." He pulls out the canvas of the *My War* album cover, the actual painting. We were jaw-dropped. It was the greatest hour and a half of my life.

Mike: Sounds like a museum tour.

Erg: It was a museum for something that only two people cared about. I never thought about it like that before, but it was absolutely going to the SST museum. I can't express enough how he just made our lives at that moment. I wish I could remember that guy's name. Treated us like kings.

Cut to the Black Flag show. Opening for Black Flag is Mike V, a skater. Backing up Greg Ginn, a taped bass track and a drummer. Playing all of *My War*. I hate to say it, but it was just not good. We were like, "It's not Black Flag." Then Black Flag comes on and it was great. We stood right in front of Greg Ginn. He's playing, he's rocking. Dez sounds great. C'el's killing it. We'd never seen C'el. We just read about him in *Get in the Van*. Robo sounds great. They play twelve songs. Then "We'll be back in ten minutes."

They start dismantling Robo's kit. They bring back the other drummer from the first set's kit and the taped bass player, and then Ginn and Dez, and that proceeds to be thirty songs. They did the gauntlet. From moment one the bass was not in time with anything else because no one could hear anything. People were throwing garbage cans onstage. It was bedlam. We had tickets for the second night and we sold them. It was a really bad show. Really a bummer.



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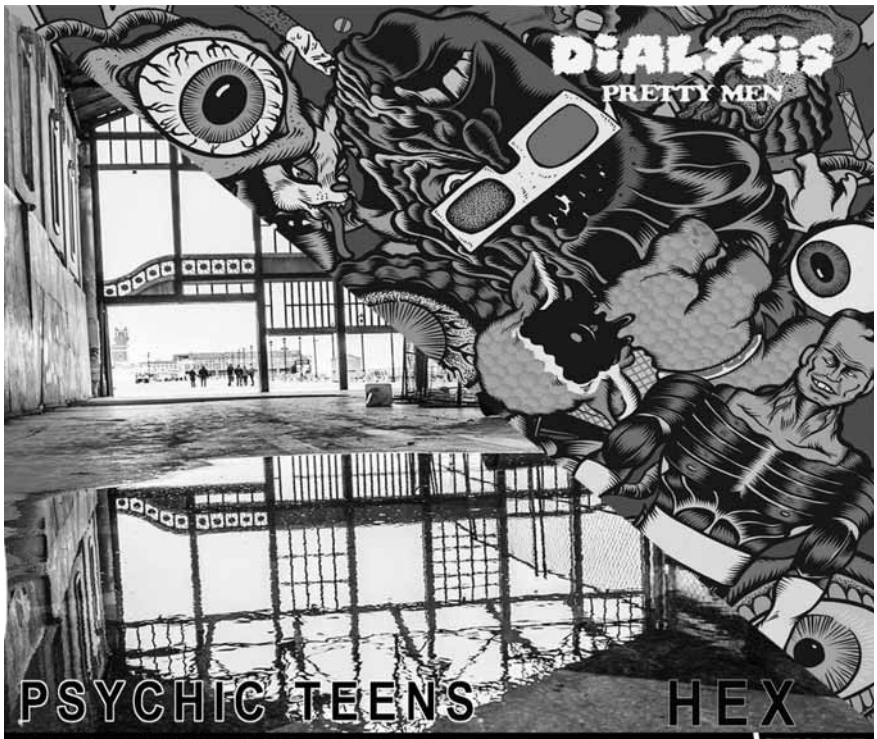
Mike: Thank goodness you had the warehouse to offset it.
Erg: The warehouse thing was the best day of my life. But it was a little tarnished. It took me a couple months to get over the show.
Mike: Later you met Greg Ginn.
Erg: That was a funny story. Greg Ginn was playing with two bands. Jambang and a band called The Taylor Texas Corrugators. They were playing in Philly at the Khyber. I took the train down from Jersey. There's a bar and a little show space to the side. Walk in to the bar. It's packed and I'm like, "Oh cool, this will be fun." People with Black Flag shirts on. I grab a beer. Then I hear music so I walk into the room. They're playing and not exaggerating—I'm prone to hyperbole but I'm not exaggerating—I was the only person in the room. Not even the people in the Black Flag shirts at the bar. I don't think they even knew that Greg Ginn was Greg Ginn. I'm watching Greg and it's cool. It's like watching a Frank Zappa solo. Frank Zappa is one of my favorite artists of all time, but he has those twenty-minute songs where thirteen minutes of it is everyone vamping on E and he just solos the whole time. And it was that for an entire set. I was stoked. I didn't go there expecting Black Flag and I didn't care that he was not doing Black Flag songs. I wanted to watch him play guitar.
Mike: And this was after…

HE PULLS OUT THE CANVAS OF THE MY WAR ALBUM COVER, THE ACTUAL PAINTING. WE WERE JAW-DROPPED. IT WAS THE GREATEST HOUR AND A HALF OF MY LIFE.

Erg: After the L.A. thing. So, an hour goes by, he's playing and I'm digging it but I'm also embarrassed. I'm the guy with the Black Flag tattoo, covering my tattoo like I don't want to be the only guy here.
Mike: Had people trickled in by now?
Erg: No, no one. I watched the whole set alone. The next band was about to go on and the bass player comes out to me and he knows I'm a fan. "How long have you been into Ginn's music?" "Oh, you know, a long time. For the last few years I have been collecting every SST record." He was like, "Do you want to meet Greg?" He takes me up to the bar, takes me to meet Greg. He's like, "Greg this is Mike. He's got all of your records.



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IF I WERE GREG GINN'S FRIEND, I WOULD GO TO HIS HOUSE EVERY DAY AND WATCH HIM PLAY SCALES.

He's got everything SST ever put out." He's like, "Nice to meet you," in his slow, stoned drawl. "Do you want some sampler CDs?" And I'm like, "Sure." Hands me a box full of a hundred SST samplers that only has the last three releases on it. It's only the jam stuff and he's like, "Give these out to your friends." Shook the guy's hand. Still a hero of mine. Wrote songs that I relate to. No punk rocker doesn't relate to "Depression" by Black Flag, you know? I really had a good time watching him play. It's beautiful. If I were Greg Ginn's friend, I would go to his house every day and watch him play scales.

Mike: We talked a lot about your dad. How about your mom?

Erg: She's the best. In Elvis Costello's book—or I think it was an interview around the book—he talks about his dad for the entire book. His dad brought him all the music and just got all this into his life. He's like, "My mom was just an incredible mom, but everyone has an incredible mom. I didn't feel like I needed to put that in the book." And that's my mom, too. She's incredibly supportive, wonderful. Just an incredible mom.

Mike: How did she take it when you chose to live with your dad?

Erg: I'm sure she was bummed, but honestly as a twelve-year-old, I was so scared to have to meet new friends.

Mike: Nothing against her.

Mike: Absolutely not. I feel like every child is more attached to their mother. But for me I was just so scared to have to live a new life.

Mike: Do you think she got that?

Erg: I don't know at the time. We haven't actually talked about it. We probably should talk about it. Me, my dad, and my mom have a much closer relationship now than we ever did when I was a kid. We're all adults now and we can hang out.

Mike: Do the three of you ever get together?

Erg: No. There've been times where they've been in the same room for a family function. Now I'm grown up, I want to sit down with them and find out the family history. I am much more curious now than I ever was. When you're a teenager you don't care about that. Honestly, if you weren't Kurt Cobain or John Lennon, I didn't give a shit what you had to say. I feel like I kind of squandered some of the time but they're still around, so let's hang out now.

Mike: That's difficult. I still make those mistakes.

Erg: My mom always said that my dad and I were so similar that we fought like brothers.

PHOTO BY MARC GAERTNER

And now that we are not living on top of each other and working together, we have a way better relationship than we ever did. It sucked for a while, almost "Stop being like me!" Butting heads because we were the same person. But I grew up a lot. I was an angry, rebellious young man. And now I'm just like, "Let's be civil and hang out. I love you, obviously. I'm the person I am because of you. Let's hang out."

SEEING THE SCENE THROUGH PUNK PHOTOGRAPHY

ALL AGES!

Photo: Terry Graham

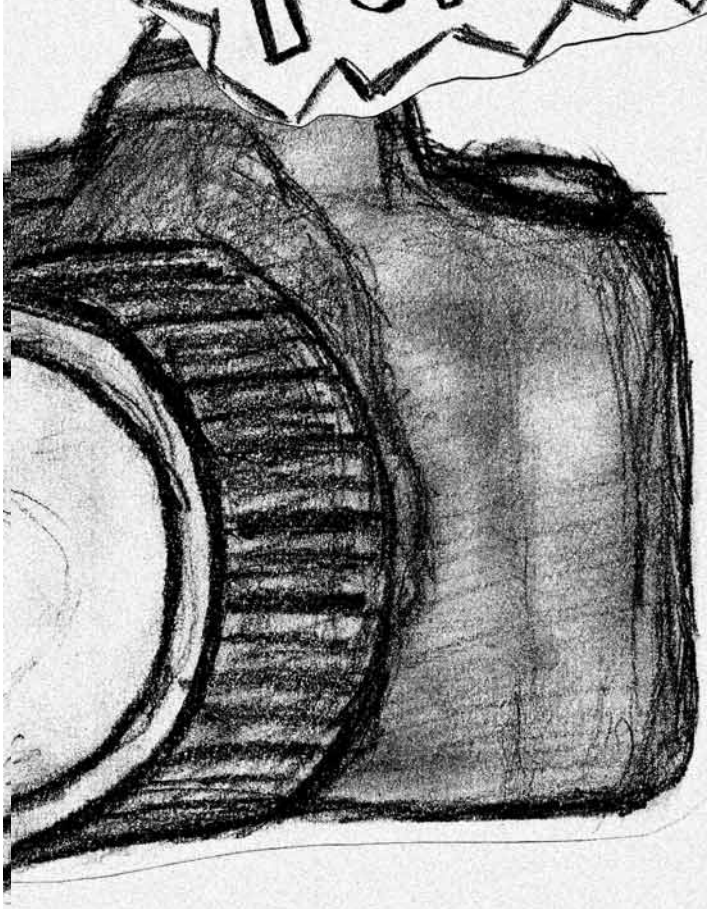
DAWN WIRTH

CHRIS BOARTS LARSON

MARTIN SORRONDEGUY

Photo: Dawn Wilson

PATRICK HOUDEK



INTERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION: DANIEL MAKAGON

PHOTOS: CHRIS BOARTS LARSON, PATRICK HOUDEK, MARTIN SORRONDEGUY, AND DAWN WIRTH

LAYOUT: BECKY BENNETT

There has been a proliferation of books and documentary films about punk culture and history in recent years. Though these media might feature some well-known photos from mostly album covers, the books and films rely heavily on previously unseen photographs made by people interested in documenting their scenes.

Of course, there are even more opportunities to see photos of well-known and more obscure bands on the internet. The shift from analog film to digital photography combined with the rapid growth of social media outlets has facilitated more opportunities for punks to create photos and share images locally and globally. For punk photographers who shot analog film in the past and who shoot with digital cameras in the present, many the goals remain the same: to visually record an energy and aesthetic that is so important to punk identity and culture and then share those experiences.

Although the availability of high quality, low-cost cameras (including cell phone cameras) creates more opportunities for people to photograph their everyday experiences, that doesn't mean all photos are equally engaging. Some photographers develop distinct styles that can help us feel the experience of being in the shot. These photographers are able to navigate the bodies that move in waves at a show. And they do so in ways that capture those brief moments in time when something magical happens. A second earlier or a second later, and the photograph might be radically different and that exciting visual experience is lost to time.

The following roundtable interview features a conversation with four punk photographers. They have been involved with different scenes and have photographed during important moments in punk's history. Their individual work and collective efforts have been crucial to telling visual stories about what it means to do and experience punk rock. We wanted to learn more about their aesthetic choices and hear their thoughts on how punk photography has changed and stayed the same.

Dawn Wirth is one of a handful of photographers to document the first wave of the Los Angeles punk rock scene. Her early work was published in various fanzines, such as *Flipside*, *Sniffin' Glue, Gen X,* and *White Stuff*. She has also published two photo books.

Chris Boarts Larson self-published *Slug & Lettuce* fanzine and has been documenting the punk scene through photography for over twenty-five years. Chris has also been a contributing columnist to *MRR, Profane Existence,* and *Razorcake*.

Martin Sorrondeguy is vocalist for Los Crudos, Limp Wrist, and Needles among other projects. He has been documenting punks and shows since the mid-'80s and has three photo books published, with a fourth on the way.

Patrick Houdek was born in Los Angeles, Calif, where he discovered punk rock. In 1985 he moved to Carbondale, Ill. and started P&S Productions to release compilation tapes featuring bands he loves. He also was an integral member of the scene that helped start the long-running punk house, Lost Cross in Carbondale. He currently resides in Chicago, where he takes photos of punk rock bands.

Daniel: What led you to start photographing punk bands?

Dawn: I saw the Damned at the Starwood and was looking around and thinking, "I want to contribute. How can I contribute?" I couldn't sing because I'm too shy, but I saw someone with a camera and thought, "I can do that." Then I signed up for a photography class in high school and for my assignments they were pretty much all punk-related. I grew up in North Hollywood, Calif. and was going to the Whisky and the Starwood and the Masque (clubs in Los Angeles), shooting all these different bands since '76.

Chris: It all started for me in 1985. I was a teenager in high school. There was a good scene in my hometown, State College, Pa. I started going to shows, started taking pictures, and started my fanzine *Slug & Lettuce* all simultaneously. My dad was a hobbyist photographer his whole life, as was my mom. It was the kind of thing where I showed an interest in photography and my mom was like, "Oh, here. I have an extra camera you can use."

Martin: I was interested in photography in high school and ended up registering at Columbia College in Chicago. It was the mid-'80s and there was a lot of weird shit going on. It was around the same time that I was getting into underground music. My family pitched in and bought me a camera for Christmas and that really kick-started things. I was going to shows, but in the early days of going to shows I didn't take my camera. I was timid and a little scared. This was an expensive piece of equipment for our means at the time and there was no way I was going to take this camera to shows where I saw people getting beat up. So I was photographing my friends and doing portraits at that point.

Patrick: I would take some photos occasionally at shows when I was younger in the '80s or early '90s. Then when I moved to Chicago in '96 or '97, I'd occasionally go out with a point-and-shoot camera and take a few photos of bands, but I wasn't that serious because I was more interested in drinking. I stopped drinking in 2005, so for a couple years I didn't go to very many shows. Then Johann's Face Records was having a twentieth anniversary show at the Abbey Pub in Chicago in 2009, so I took photos that night. I had a lot of fun. After that, I started going to more shows and photographing them because it gave me something to do and to not think about that I am not drinking. I'm sure that during some of those years I probably went to three or four shows, but then in 2009 and up until 2016 when I moved to Denver, I was averaging more than a show a week and photographing all the time.

Daniel: You've shot in different kinds of music spaces. Does the type of space influence how you work and the photos you take?

Dawn: Back then ('77-'78), I was shooting at the Masque because not many other photographers were going there. When I went to the Whisky or the Starwood, I had to fight for space. If I went to the Whisky, I would get there maybe an hour before it opened just so I could get the one spot on the side of the stage where I could get all the members of the band. When I went to the Sex Pistols show at Winterland, there were people squishing me against the stage and there was this asshole guy next to me who kept putting his elbows in my face. I remember feeling—as I was walking from

The Screamers, Tomata du Plenty | Photo: Dawn Wirth

the front toward the back to go out—like I had been in a war all day. I was just so drained with all the people pushing up against me. So I probably got about six shots. It was just so hard to see and focus and try to shoot.

Chris: There's something much more intimate about someone's living room or, likewise, a basement that you are in every single week with the same setup. That creates a comfort level. For example, I photographed at ABC No Rio for years and years. That was kind of my home. I knew where to put myself in order to do what I needed to do, to get the shot I wanted, and to be protected from a flying foot. Likewise, if I walked into a completely new place then I had to figure all of that out. There's always a lot of anticipation: Where are the bodies going to be flying from? Where is the best angle? If I get in this spot, and the band plays and it's explosive, am I going to be able to move to the other side or not? That's all part of the fun and the experience.

Martin: I generally do not like photographing the club spaces. There's an overproduced sound and there's an overproduced visual. I don't like seeing punk in those kinds of venues. There's something way more exciting and telling and revealing about punk when you look at underground show space photos, where you see part of the audience and part of the venue and part of the band. That really reveals the grit and its illegality. When you see photos of big stages and lights, it's just another rock band photo. Those photographs are often of a musician versus a whole story. If you look at early photographs of the L.A. scene stuff or New York, you're almost smelling the photographs. I feel like I'm in there because the photographs are visually really rich.

But if you're a smart punk photographer, you don't keep your face buried in your camera in the small spaces because you're gonna get knocked the fuck out. It's happened on occasion where I'm caught off guard and I'm like, "Damn, how did that happen?" You have to be constantly alert and aware. I've had mic stands kicked in my face, I've been knocked down. Shit's happening. Things are moving. So you can't spend time trying to figure out what you got.

Patrick: For me, the most fun are basement or house shows and then clubs and then big shows. At house shows, you're part of the crowd and I like the energy that's going on. Whereas at clubs, especially for the opening band, nobody's moving around; they're just kind of standing there. And it's not just the bands that matter. That's why I like the smaller shows, because I like getting the crowd in the shots. A band could be rockin' out, going crazy, but if you don't see the crowd, you don't know—maybe nobody's there. The crowd adds to it when you can see how excited the crowd is. But there's another thing about big shows: you usually are allowed to photograph three songs. I don't like that because the band members aren't even sweating yet. I don't want to see them all pretty.

Daniel: Would you say that there is something distinct in your photographs that represent your style? Is there something you try to do when you are shooting that helps you capture unique images that reflect your style?

Dawn: I always try to make sure it's framed before I shoot. The better you can make sure that your subject matter is in the frame the way

Where are the bodies going to be flying from? Where is the best angle?

– Chris Boarts Larson

you want it—when you get in the darkroom or you edit, it makes that process go a lot faster. And I would pretty much have my camera up to my eye the whole time, just waiting for that one good shot. I had to find my own film and photo paper, so if I only had one roll of film, with, say, thirty-six shots, I had to divide those shots up based on how many bands were playing. I had to make every shot count. There was no digital back then.

Also, when I picked up my first camera when I was sixteen, *Life* magazine probably subconsciously influenced me. I loved looking at *Life* when I was growing up. Alfred Stieglitz and Diane Arbus, I loved their work. I learned that a really good photographer can tell a story with a photograph. I always want my photographs to tell a story, not to be something where you are thinking: "What's this about?" And I hope that when people see my photographs they can feel what it was like to be there when it all started.

Chris: I remember a friend telling me: "You need to listen, connect, and take the picture when the action happens." That was the best piece of advice I ever had. That's what it's all about. It was neat to have that come from someone who wasn't an artist or a teacher; they were punk. "You gotta listen to music and get the action shot."

There are a few things that I've done over the years that have made my look, if you will. I do a lot of long exposure. I almost always use a flash and a little bit of a slow speed so I get a motion blur or a light blur. And I don't tend to shoot with a wide-angle lens. A lot of people have a style and you can just tell that it is their photo. Mine is a lot of motion and a lot of movement. I tend to go for that action shot: flying hair, jumps, bodies flying. At the same time, as much as I think I have a style and a look, sometimes I try to break out of that and push myself to do new things. But, sometimes, [laughing] I will see photos in a magazine and think, "Hey, that's not mine," so I'm obviously not the only one who shoots in that way. Maybe someone saw one of my photographs and thought they'd try that—and I obviously learned that from somebody a long time ago.

Martin: If I can catch an image that moves away from the screaming into the mic thing, and instead there is a certain look, some expression that's coming through or something bizarre happening from the audience, those are the photos that excite me more. Or something weird happening with the lighting that creates a crazy mood. I use a lot of flash and I do a lot of bouncing so it kind of cloaks the image. People who learned analog learned how to read light. I can look at a lighting situation and I can still tell you about pushing film for dramatic, rich, contrasty photos. I think a lot of people who learned with digital don't know how to read light. Some people do. But when I shot film, I knew: "This is super hot light and I need to re-adjust everything." I've learned not to discard the fine art behind photography.

Patrick: I do a thing where I use a really slow shutter speed and I move the camera while the shutter's going off so you can see movement and some blur. But I'm trying not to do that as much because I figure I can try new things. Denver has a lot of mid-sized theaters and a lot of those shows, even though it's not a photo pit, they don't allow flash. That's been a challenge for me, learning how to shoot without flash. I know people who don't shoot with flash, but from being at basement shows all the time, you kind of have to 'cause a place like Lost Cross (Carbondale, Ill.) it's like one broken lamp on the ground and some Christmas lights. Not shooting with flash changes the look because the stuff I do with a slow shutter speed needs that flash since it freezes the person but not the background

Infest | Photo: Martin Sorrondeguy

stuff. In a way, I have to pay attention more to what's behind whereas before it would get blurred out.

People getting into it, who are trying to take photos of bands, just go do it. Don't try to copy what I do or what other photographers do. Figure it out. Nowadays with digital if it looks like shit, just fuckin' erase it. Go to another show and do it again until you get better. I know that it can feel intimidating to walk up front, but you've got to just do it because photographing from the back won't be interesting.

Daniel: Documentary photographs can tell stories in many ways. A single photograph can tell a story or a story can be told through a series of photographs. When you look at your photographs after you leave the show, are you more focused on the single image or a series of images?

Dawn: It's kind of both. When I was shooting the stuff, I wasn't thinking: "What kind of story am I telling?" I don't remember my teachers saying that pictures should tell a story. Like I said, growing up I lived on *Life* magazine. I loved to see the pictures in that magazine. And in all those pictures, one photograph did tell a story. Maybe seeing all those great photographers who were shooting then, and were in those pages, might have influenced me—how I cropped or how I framed something when I shot it and not even realizing at that time what I was doing when it came to telling a story.

I've been in three group shows in the past couple years. In these situations I think about how the pictures fit together, but it depends on how many images they allowed me to show. At one show, I got to have two big images and at another show I was asked for three 8"x10"s. The last one was a joint show with another photographer and I got to show fifteen pieces.

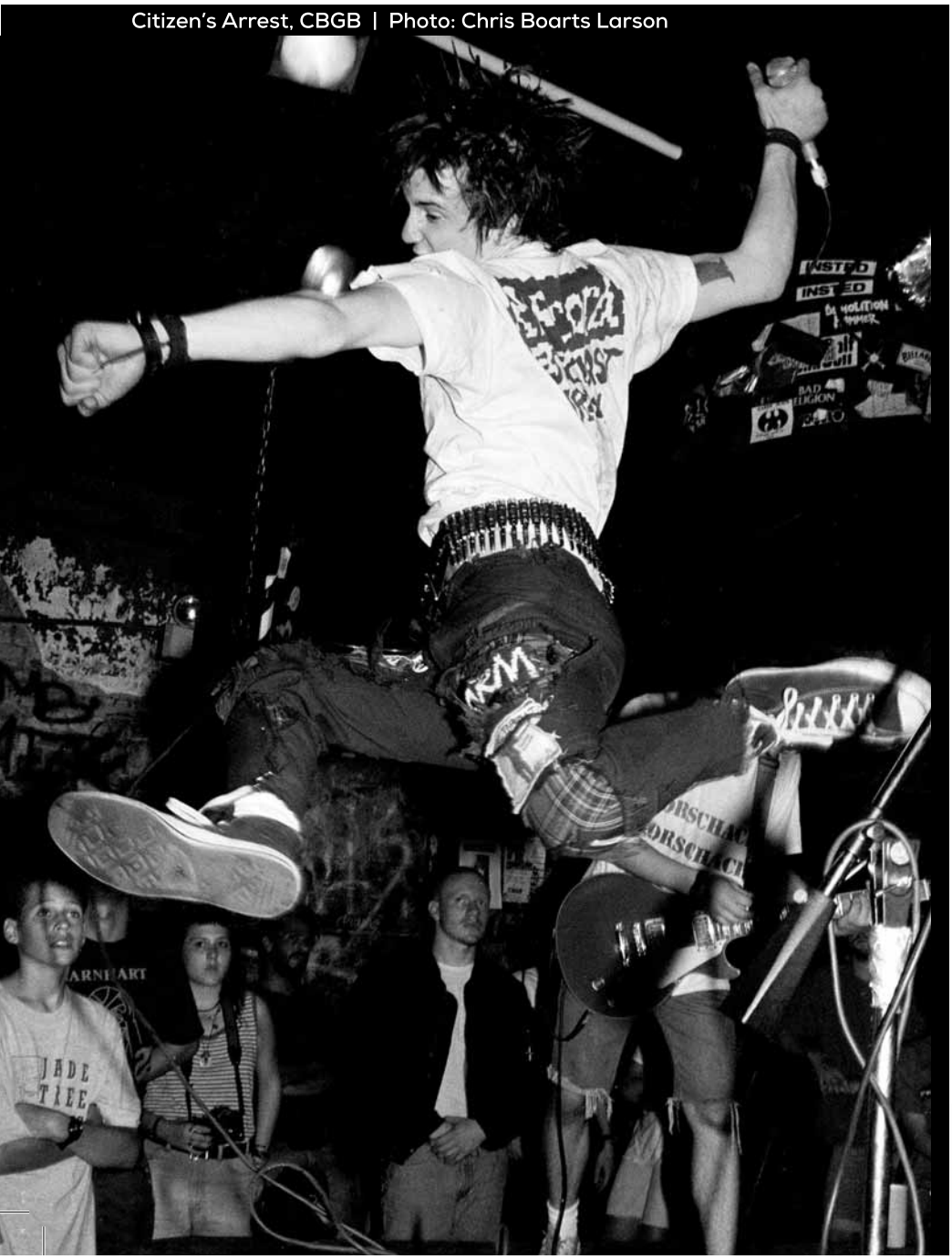
Chris: I'd like for each one to stand alone and have the strength to tell whatever story or capture whatever moment. And I hope that that moment is worthy of a story. But there is something to be said for the series or putting photos together that can tell even more of a story. I do find that I need to edit myself more because I get so excited. I'm like, "More. More. You want one of these? Well, have twenty." I make fun of myself about that all the time, so I don't know if I am good at picking one.

Martin: It's a bit of both. I think there's that one photo that tells its story but there are some photos that it's almost like code: it needs to be followed up by something else to reveal the story. You can get that one image sometimes and think, "Oh, whoa, this image has a lot going on. What do you think is happening?" And there are other images that need some extra support. You don't ever go to a show, an exhibit, and there's only one photo. There are group shows and you have one photo—a photo that best represents you—maybe the most iconic image that people would know and that's talked about, but if you have a solo show, don't you dare put one fuckin' image up.

In a book, because I travel a lot, I might put a bunch of stuff together related to a city—a bunch of L.A.-relevant stuff, same goes for Chicago. I did a queer issue for one of my zines, *Susto*. So anything that was sort of on the nastier, weirder, more queer—it wasn't just about a person who's queer—it's moments that are queer. You're going, "What's going on here? Is this a show? What is this?" So there could be a theme around a series that I put out there.

And when I've laid out my books, there may be a question about how I would jump from a show to a really serene moment by an ocean, for example. There may be an image at a punk show that is really hectic at times but there's just this serenity about it; there's space for some reason. How will I, as a storyteller, take you from one place to another? You're putting the viewer in a position to ask why the hell did I just do that? "Well, look back at what you just saw and see if there's any connection." I like putting people in that position.

Patrick: It depends on the situation I'm in. Especially if I commit to go to a show and I am going to review the show myself, or someone else is reviewing the show, then I will use different images. There are often multiple bands so I am photographing all of the bands. And then there's the beginning of a set where they're nice and clean but by the



Citizen's Arrest, CBGB | Photo: Chris Boarts Larson

Sass Dragons, Lucky Gator Loft | Photo: Patrick Houdek

If you're a smart punk photographer, you don't keep your face buried in your camera in the small spaces because you're gonna get knocked the fuck out.

– Martin Sorrondeguy

end of the set more action has happened and the crowd is getting into it.

But if it is a show I am going to and I'm going to photograph because I'm there, then I'm usually looking for that one shot that would show how much fun this fuckin' show was without having to show all five bands. And, you know, even if I am shooting for a review and I go through the photos, there usually is a photo that—at least in my head—is the photo that I'll remember about this show.

Daniel: Do you think that if we look at punk photos that were made during different moments in punk's history, we will see differences? Or do the photos have a similar vibe, making the images a bit more timeless?

Dawn: When I started shooting, the scene was so small that you could invent yourself. We didn't have a shop like Sex to buy punk gear. We were going to thrift stores to create our own outfits. And from the '90s on, it became easier. You can go and buy all of that stuff in stores now. The fashion changes can be seen in the photos. But I'll tell you something. My daughter shot the Weirdos at the Echoplex. I didn't because I was selling my photo book that I'd done of the Weirdos. The funny thing was that she captured a shot of Dix Denney that was identical to something I had shot at the Masque.

Chris: That is interesting because it ties into another aesthetic goal that I have, which has always been a timelessness. There was nothing overt to say that this is today. A band from today, yesterday, ten, or twenty years ago, there's something exactly the same. And yet everything is completely different. That's kind of what's fun about it. I have pictures from the streets of the Lower East Side where a car shows up. At the time, that was a throwaway for me. "There's a stupid car in the picture. That does not work." Now it's like, "Holy fucking shit. Look at all those cars, they're huge." They're so distinctly of the '80s. Now that's amazing. "There's the World Trade Center in the background. Whooooooooooa." At the time, the World Trade Center and a bunch of big cars totally didn't work for what I was going for. But now, retroactively, wow.

Hoax | Photo: Martin Sorrondeguy

So the same thing could be said about pictures that I took at that time of a band in a basement that, looking back now, you could see certain things that didn't necessarily mean anything at the time, things that now mark it as part of that time period: a band's shirt, style of shoes. I guess mostly it would be a fashion thing. But fashion is funny, too, because punk fashion is often so retro. [laughs] So I think that there are things that mark photographs distinctly of their time but there also can be a timelessness to it. I like both now. But I like a detail, something that is small that you need to look closely to identify.

Martin: I think it's about timing and the moment. You can look at work that comes from the late '70s and you can try to guess who did the photo. For example, Ruby Ray's portraits are fucking amazing. But when you're looking at photos from a show, sometimes it's hard to know because more stuff is coming to the surface. You're seeing more work. And there were a lot of really cool photos, a lot of good photographers, or people who were there at the right time who were catching this stuff. There were people who had little Instamatics and the photos might look like garbage but there's a fuckin' charm to it. But then there were people who you could tell took photo classes. They knew how to meter, knew how to use their flash, and you look at that and think: "This is good."

You know, some people's images become iconic. A lot of it is bound to who you photographed. If you were a photographer who photographed in the middle of Iowa, you're not going to be as known as somebody who photographed Black Flag or the Misfits or the guy flipping on the Wasted Youth record. It is an iconographic photograph. There's no way around it. And I'm always battling that as a photographer. If I strip away who the hell that is/what band that is, is it a good photo?

Patrick: I do think you see something unique. In the past, the bigger shows didn't have those barriers or photo pits like they do now. There was a lot more crowd participation at those shows because there wasn't a barrier. These days, you're not going to see something like the Olympic Auditorium, where there's fuckin' thirty people on the stage and doing stage dives and shit. Nobody can do that now. No club is going to let you do that. I definitely think you can see the changes in the way the crowd is and how they interact with the bands.

Daniel: Punk now has such a rich history, but it's also a very ephemeral culture and always has been. Zines are created and die off, DIY venues tend to run in three-year cycles, records are released but quickly go out of print, labels are started and then fold. Because of this, archiving is really important if punks are going to tell their own stories. How do you see your work relative to archiving and helping tell a story about punk's past and present?

Dawn: I had all my negatives because I would develop at school in a photography

If there weren't people taking pictures, nobody would have anything to go back and refer to or to reference.

– Dawn Wirth

class, cut the negatives, and put them in sleeves. We were encouraged to keep a notebook, which is what I did, but that wasn't touched again until probably 2005.

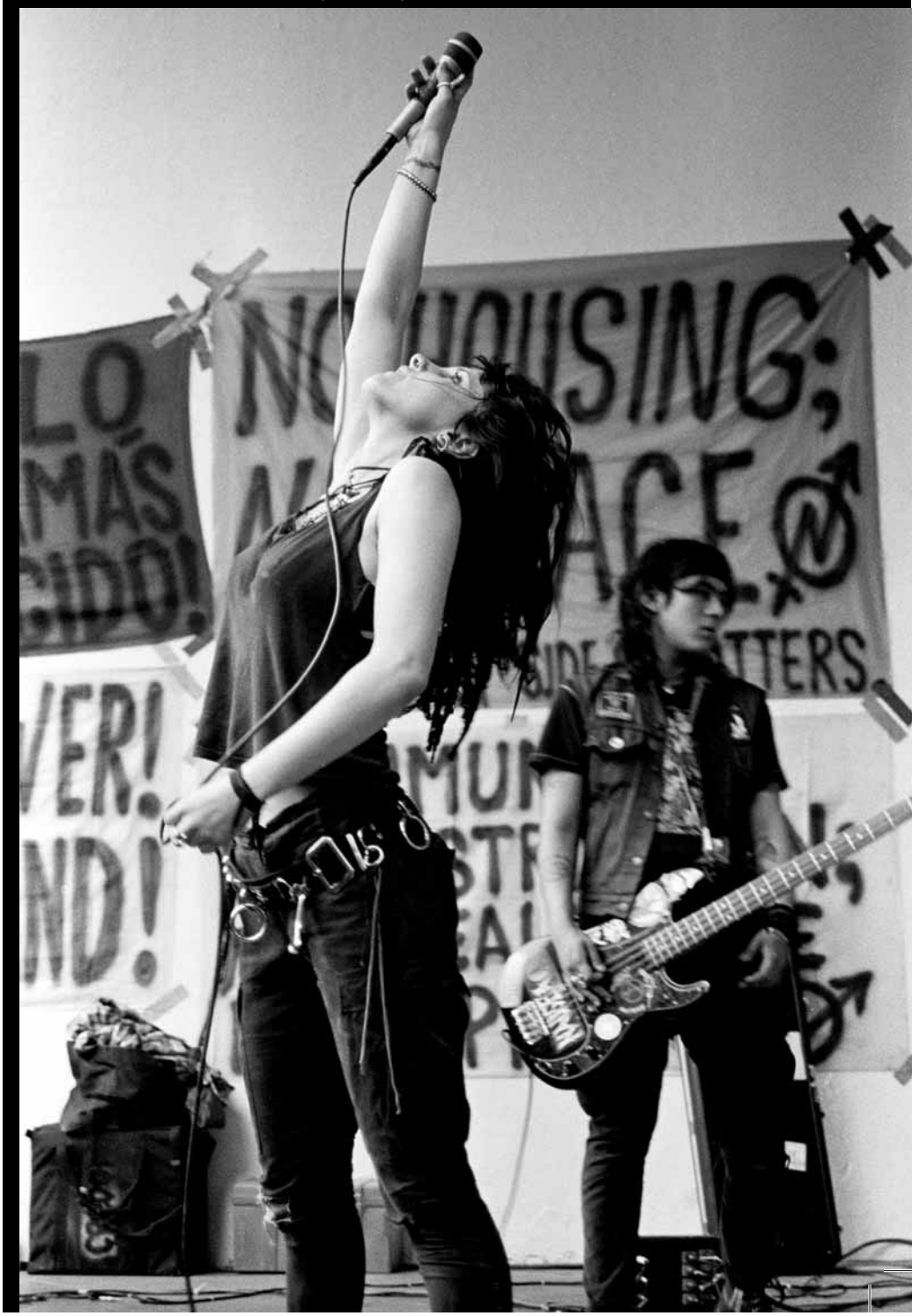
Back in 2005, my daughter and I went to Alice Bag's house. I probably hadn't seen her in twenty years. I said, "I'll bring the Bible" and she asked, "What the hell is that?" It was all my negatives. She got out her little loupe and asked if I knew what I had here. "A bunch of photos that nobody cares about. That's what I got here." And she said that this was a goldmine. And from there, she helped me get my first show in a gallery called Anti-Market. After that, I started to display my stuff a lot more. Back when I shot this stuff, some of it was in fanzines but a lot of it nobody saw. If there weren't people taking pictures, none of that would have been documented. Nobody would have anything to go back and refer to or to reference. The same is true for people who were out there with early camcorders and filming these bands, like Target Video filming a ton of important stuff.

Chris: It's interesting because going back twenty years when I was in school, I remember one of my teachers saying, "No more pictures of people drinking beer. That does nothing. You're not telling any story with that." And I thought, "Well, that makes a lot more of an interesting picture than a picture of Neil Robinson filling orders for his distro." But, at the same time, it did plant a seed for me.

I'm telling this story, a story that is a very positive one about all of the great things that my community is doing. This is a scene about growth and action. We're creating our own world and doing cool things. But if all my pictures are of people drinking beer, there's a problem. So the problem is that my story is not being told in my pictures and I've considered that as one of many voices in the back of my head in terms of documenting. So, that's kind of one thing.

For me, the history and the document is something that happened and it happened for me just having done it and having been there. Twenty years ago did I say, "I am going to document this?" No. I was doing

Nausea, Tompkins Sqare Park | Photo: Chris Boarts Larson



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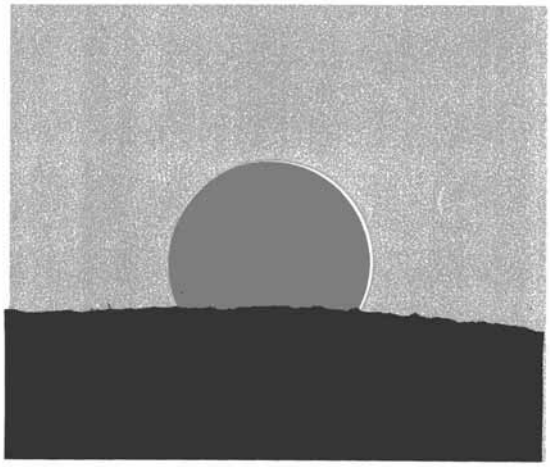

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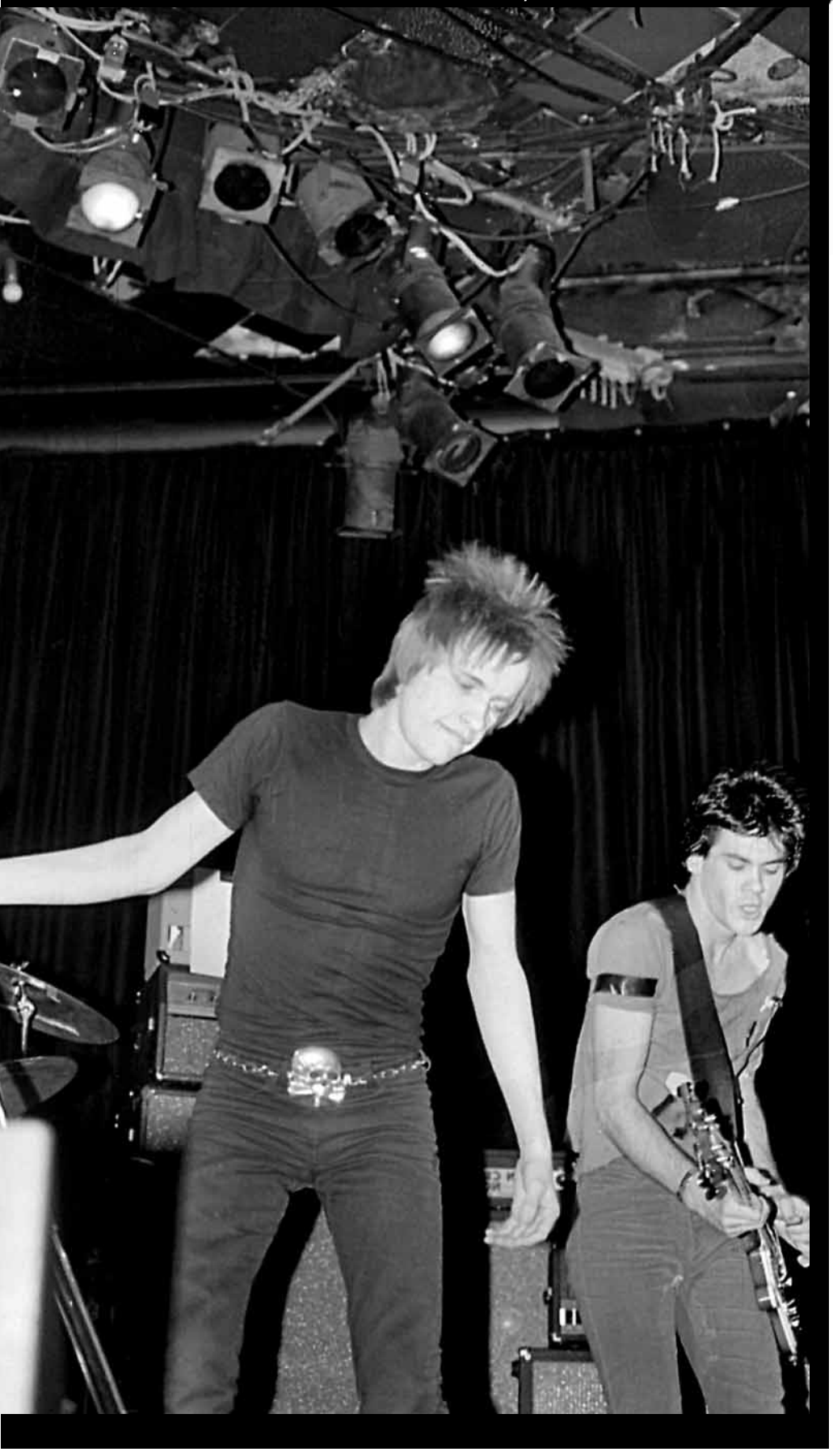

The Skulls, Whisky A Go Go | Photo: Dawn Wirth

it. I had a zine and I was in a cool place during cool times and I was documenting it. Even the friend who said, "Oh, you don't have pictures of this band; you better take pictures of this band." That was right, which translated to: "I have to take pictures of every single band because that is now my job." And so I end up with a body of work, an archive, and then I think that I gotta keep doing this. There are plenty of other people who have amazing archives of wherever they were and whatever they did. A lot of them overlap with mine and complement mine, which is really cool.

Martin: Historically, punks were not good about archiving. Everything was disposable. Everything was "now." If you even look at records, who has not bought a record that looks like it was used as an ashtray? [laughs] The value that we placed on punk was that you felt it: you were so in the moment with this band and this song that it wasn't about the artifact.

I think the mentality shifted once the universities and the museums took an interest and threw money at punk. I collected things because I was obsessed. Now, with photographers, if you were trained or schooled you were taught to take care of your negatives. You could do whatever the fuck to your prints because you could always make more of those, but don't you dare have a cigarette burning next to your negatives.

One of the things people fail to talk about because we're in this nostalgia phase is that even punks believed at one point that nobody cared. Punks did an about face and they went on and did whatever they did, getting rid of what they had. I was one of those kids who said, "Give it to me. Pass it on to me." And I still have a lot of that stuff. It's culture—music, art—and it maters.

Patrick: A lot of times you appreciate things later because it's your past. This is a way of remembering what you did a year ago, ten years ago, whatever. Especially now with the internet, everything is so easy in a sense, so some things might not be as appreciated, as much in the moment, or they will be appreciated more once they're gone. I think about Fireside Bowl. I'd go there every single day and didn't think that this place is going to close some day. You don't think about the importance of that place until it's gone. With photographs, you see bands from their tour in *Razorcake* or on the internet, which is cool. But then they break up, you go back to look at photos because you miss that band, and that's when you appreciate the photos.

What is interesting is that it's not always the people who produce the photos or the records or the fanzines. A lot times it's the fans who are archiving; because, if you're in a band, you put out a bunch of records, but

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Sivle Si Dog

Rats From a Sinking Ship
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Bad Taste, Lost Cross House | Photo: Patrick Houdek

The value that we placed on punk was that you felt it: you were so in the moment with this band and this song that it wasn't about the artifact.

– Martin Sorrondeguy

when the band breaks up, you don't really care about it anymore or you've moved on to your new band. And maybe they think, "I'm in the band. This record is out, so I can always get it." But there's always some fan who wants to have everything. So I think that is great that there are people who will archive this stuff themselves and make it available so others can look back at it.

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En Busca de Algo Más, UGLY, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2015

Get Shot (A Visual Diary, 1985-2012) Make a Mess, Los Angeles, 2012
Porqueria, Publisher BASE, Tokyo, Japan, 2009

Patrick Houdek
patrickhoudekphotography.com

TOP FIVES
RAZORCAKE

Alicia Armijo
1. The Beta Machine, *All This Time* EP
2. Culture Shock, *Attention Span* LP
3. Raukous, "Black Mass"
4. Mastodon, *Emperor of Sand* LP
5. The Black Angels, "Young Men Dead"

Art Ettinger
• Kepi Ghoulie, *Lost and Loving It!* LP
• ANTiSEEN, *The Complete Drastic Sessions* LP
• Submachine, *People* 7"
• Face To Face, *Say What You Want* 7"
• Down For Life, *Harder Than Hell* LP

Bill Pinkel
• Sam Cooke, *Best of* LP
• Career Suicide, *Machine Response* LP
• Macho Boys, Self-titled LP
• Colleen Green, *I Want to Grow Up* LP
• Bash & Pop, *Friday Night Is Killing Me* LP

Billy Kostka
• Nag, *False Anxiety* 7"
• Radiation Risks, *Goodbye Money* 7"
• Playboy, *Celebration* 7"
• Cereal Killer, *Demos* 7"
• Mordecai, *Abstract Recipe* LP

Camylle Reynolds
1. Playing with Alice Bag and Valleygrrls in Oakland.
2. The release of the compilation I put together for Emotional Response Records called *Typical Girls Volume 2*. Proud!
3. Finishing a hellish quarter of grad school. Universe was testing me.
4. The return of Kamala And The Karnivores.
5. Daydreaming about our upcoming tour to Japan.

Candace Hansen
Top Five Shows So Far This Year
1. Downtown Boys at Baby's All Right
2. No Side and Generacion Suicida at Continental Room
3. Songs For Moms at White Horse Inn
4. Seth Bogart at Club Scum One Year Anniversary
5. Hanging out with Spray Tan at Mountain View Cemetery (it counts!)

Chad Williams
1. Moral Panic, Self-titled LP
2. Iron Reagan, *Crossover Ministry* LP
3. Career Suicide, *Machine Response* LP
4. Remnants, *Ruff Mix* EP
5. City Bus Hand Jobs, *Fast Dark Dirty Blues*

Chris Mason
1. Mount Eerie, *A Crow Looked at Me* LP
2. Booji Boys, Self-titled LP
3. C.H.E.W., *Demo* 7"
4. Super Unison, *Auto* LP
5. Jim And The French Vanilla, *Afraid of the House* LP

Chris Terry
• Biznaga, *Sentido del Espectaculo* CD
• *POPs (Parents on Parenting)*, zine
• Talking Heads, *Remain in Light* and *Speaking in Tongues* LPs
• Run The Jewels, live and *RTJ 3* LP
• Colson Whitehead, *Underground Railroad* (novel)

Clara Luci Acosta
• Interviewing Chicken from Dead To Me
• Interviewing Jason and Chad from Western Addiction
• Western Addiction, *Tremulous* LP
• Ogikubo Station, Self-titled
• Getting an IUD. Keep your politics away from my fucking body!

Craven Rock
1. Exploring Cuenca, Spain with my sweetheart
2. *The 9 Lives of Ray the Cat Jones* by Stewart Home (book)
3. P.O.S and Sims at The Crocodile
4. The Baboon Show, *The World Is Bigger than You*
5. *Basic Paper Airplane #7* (zine)

Cynthia Pinedo
Top 5 Show Moments of 2017 (so far)
1. Chris Conley of Saves The Day crying at the end of their When We Were Young Fest set, and being so thankful of the audience for their support. I cried too. It was so beautiful.
2. Laura Stevenson's jokes at Funzone in Santa Barbara. She is an amazing vocalist and performer; so funny.
3. SOAR's dreamy harmonies at their Funzone show.
4. Milo of The Descendents' CamelBak usage onstage at When We Were Young. Innovation at its finest because he didn't have to stop at all to drink water... or did it have coffee in there?
5. Skacademy Awards. All of it, especially people skanking while eating pizza.

Daryl Gussin
• Urochromes, *Night Bully* 7"
• Cyanide Pills, *Sliced and Diced* LP
• El Banda, *Wściekłyszpaler* 7"
• Thin Lizzy, *Black Rose* LP
• Dick Lucas's uncanny ability to balance anything.

Eric Baskauskas
The 5 Best Things about Power Trip's new album Nightmare Logic*:*
1. The riffs
2. The lyrics
3. Tour with Iron Reagan
4. The art
5. Headbanging

Gabby Gonzalez
Punk Bands of Today
1. Acrylics
2. Muscle Before Paradise
3. GOON
4. Bleeders
5. Salvia Palth

Garrett Barnwell
1. The Bombpops, *Fear of Missing Out* CD
2. Scarboro, *Here Comes the Hangover* CD
3. No Crisis, *She's into the Scene* LP
4. *MRR* #407 (Amazing *Razorcake* review!)
5. Irony (The literary technique)

Griffin Wynne
Top 5 Things (The Only Good Things) That Happened During Venus Retrograde, (In Which I Negatively Encountered a Number of My Exes and Re-Installed and Deleted Tinder Six Times.)
• Diet Cig, *I Swear I'm Good at This* CS
• Noname NPR Tiny Desk Concert
• Vagabon, live at The Echo, Los Angeles, 3/22
• Hiccup, *Imaginary Enemies* CD
• *Instinct to Ruin*, by L. Mathis (book)

Jennifer Federico
Top 5 Songs for Staying Angry (Part II)
• G.L.O.S.S., "Fight"
• Tørsö, "Eating Scraps"
• No Statik, "Deadly Repercussions"
• Career Suicide, "Play the Part"
• Replica, "Pitchfork and Torches"

Jimmy Alvarado
• Crowd, *Surf Ghetto Riot* LP
• *New York Doll* documentary
• The System, *Slave to the Machine* LP
• UV-TV, *Glass* LP
• Biznaga, *Sentido del Espectaculo* LP

Jim Woster
Top Five Razorcake Podcasts from the First 100, in Numerical Order
• #12
• #24
• #29
• #57
• #90

Joe Dana
1. The Damned at the Bellasco Theater
2. Ollin and their alter egos, Dirty Old Town, performing the Pogues' *Rum Sodomy and the Lash* album on St. Patrick's Day
3. Pu$$y-Cow's last-ish show with our drummer, Danny Poulos,

Machine Response LP — Career Suicide

at Dipiazza's with Suicycos and Pee Wee Herman Cholos
4. Nashville Pussy and Zeke at Alex's Bar
5. Razorcake's I <3 Drinking Beer & Listening to Records Happy Hour has a permanent home at Footsies in L.A. every second Saturday. Please visit.

Jon Mule

1. *The Flintstones* (comic)
2. YouTube videos of Penny Rimbaud
3. Western Addiction, *Tremulous*
4. *Jodorowsky's Dune* (film)
5. Sunn O)))

Juan Espinosa

• Dreamdecay, *Yú* LP, and live at Five Star Bar, L.A.
• Anal Trump, *That Makes Me Smart!* 7"
• The Secret Prostitutes, *Tiger Express* LP
• S.H.I.T., *i* 7"
• Career Suicide, *Machine Response* LP

Kayla Greet

• The Observers, The Spits, Clorox Girls, Bi-Marks at Tonic Lounge, Portland, Ore.
• Earth Girls, *Wanderlust*
• *Coady and the Creepies* (comic) b/w playing pinball with Liz Prince at Comicon
• Accidente, *Pulso*
• Treasure Fleet, *The Sun Machine* (record and film)

Kevin Dunn

1. *Coady and the Creepies* #1 comic book
2. Macho Boys, Self-titled
3. Big Eyes, *Stake Your Claim*
4. Piss Test, Self-titled
5. Drakulas, *Raw Wave*

Kurt Morris

1. The Dillinger Escape Plan, *Dissociation*
2. Power Trip, *Nightmare Logic*
3. Black Flag, *In My Head*
4. Strand Of Oaks, *Hard Love*
5. *All I Want to Do Is Live* by Trace Ramsey (book)

Lauren Denitzio

Top 5 New Records I'm Looking Forward to
1. Cayetana, *New Kind of Normal*
2. Katie Ellen, TBA
3. Antarctigo Vespucci, TBA
4. Caves, *Always Why*
5. PWR BTM, *Pageant*

MariNaomi

1. *So excited to be here.*
2. I got an advance peek at Eric Kostiuk Williams' graphic novel *Condo Heartbreak Disco*, and then I got to have dinner with him, gossiping about drag queens and comics.
3. A huge life change looms in front of me, and I don't know which direction I'll go yet.
4. Remnants of California's superbloom linger, and jasmine is blooming all over Los Angeles.
5. Sasha Velour.

Megan Razzetti

• *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* by Angela Y. Davis
• The new Black Dots and Gentlemen Prefer Blood split 7"
• Snagging show flyers off of the bathroom walls of various venues.
• Kendrick Lamar, *DAMN* LP
• Spending much-needed quality time with people I love and support at La Escalera Fest Six6seis in San Diego

Michael T. Fournier

• Plural Being, demo CS
• Marron, *Terrenos* LP
• Generacion Suicida, *Sombras* LP
• Pissed Jeans, *Why Love Now* LP and live at ONCE Ballroom, Somerville, MA 02/25/17
• Sister, Brother demo

Mike Faloon

• Chook Race, *Around the House* LP
• De La Soul, *and the Anonymous Nobody* LP
• Wayne Hancock, *Slingin' Rhythm*
• Waco Brothers, *Going Down in History* LP
• Young Fresh Fellows, *Extintores y Txipirones* CD

Mike Frame

1. Pegboy, live in Denver
2. Kreator and Testament, new albums
3. Lemuria and Cayetana, live in Denver
4. *Corner Gas* (television series)
5. Chris Hedges and Matt Taibbi books

Paul Comeau

Top Albums of Summer (Play at Max Volume Only)
• H_2O, *Thicker Than Water*
• Verse, *From Anger and Rage*
• The Hope Conspiracy, *Cold Blue*
• Shelter, *Mantra*
• AC/DC, *Highway to Hell*

Paul Silver

1. Taco Hell, *Retainer* MLP
2. Deforesters, *Leonard* LP
3. Hiccup, *Imaginary Enemies* LP
4. Kira Jari, Self-titled LP
5. Svetlanas at Soda Bar, San Diego

Replay Dave

• UV-TV, *Glass* LP
• Crusades, *This Is a Sickness, and Sickness Will End* LP
• Vivian K, *Verses* LP
• Deadaires, Self-titled LP
• Cropduster, *Strange Sort of Prayer* CD

Rev Nørb

• So What, *Hard Gum* LP
• 99ers / Darlington, Split 7"
• Citizen Blast Kane, *Straight to Video* 12"
• Sleaford Mods, *English Tapas* LP
• Ted Prokash, *Journey to the Center of the Dream* (book)

Rich Cocksedge

• Stiff Little Fingers live at Exeter Phoenix and at Cardiff Tramshed (40th Anniversary Tour)
• Uranium Club, *All of Them Naturals* LP
• Giganto, *Latiga Canta* LP
• Bear Trade, *Silent Unspeakable* LP
• Buzz Rodeo, *SPORTS* LP

Sal Lucci

1. Aquarian Blood, *Last Nite in Paradise* LP
2. Rik And The Pigs, "*Don't Tell On Me" b/w "Gimme Mick"* 7"
3. Rik, *Snarky Remark* EP
4. Roy Loney And The Phantom Movers, *Phantom Tracks* LP
5. US Weekly, live

Naked Rob

1. Silver Screams, *Defective Machines* LP (Boston punk/rock)
2. Futuro, *A Torre da Derrota* (São Paulo punk rock)
3. Power, *Electric Glitter Boogie* LP (Aussie rock'n'roll)
4. Xetas, *The Tower* LP (Austin noise rock/punk)
5. Fuck You Pay Me, *Dumbed Down* LP (Cleveland hardcore)

Rene Navarro

1. Lenguas Largas live at Golden Beat Studios
3. Pedal Strike and Generacion Suicida live at Cafe NELA
3. Marriage Material demo
4. Writing new music with Desidia
5. Trap Girl demo

Ryan Nichols

1. Rank/Xerox, *M.Y.T.H.* EP
2. Mark Burgess, *A View from a Hill* (book)
3. David Carson, *The End of Print* (book)
4. ACTORS, "Post Traumatic Love"
5. B Boys, *No Worry No Mind* LP

Sean Arenas

• Street Eaters, *The Envoy* LP
• Middle Children, *Earth Angel* LP
• Artefact, *Votive Offering* LP
• El Banda, *Przejdzie Ci* LP
• Chest Pain, *The Primate's Advantage* 7"

Sean Koepenick

1. ALL, *Pummel* LP
2. Bash & Pop, *Friday Night Is Killing Me* LP
3. Black Star Riders, *Heavy Fire* LP
4. Career Suicide, *Machine Response* LP
5. Paul Collins Beat, *Long Time Gone* / *To Beat or Not to Beat* LP

Susan de Place

I Listen to Audio Books at Work, and They're Best When Read by the Author. Some Recent Favorites:
• Carrie Brownstein, *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*
• Kim Gordon, *Girl in a Band*
• NOFX, *The Hepatitis Bathtub and Other Stories*
• John Taylor, *In the Pleasure Groove*
• Patti Smith, *Just Kids*

Theresa W.

Top Five Spring Records
1. Billy Reese Peters / Grabass Charlestons, split 12"
2. La Pêche, *Bright and Bending* EP
3. Tanya Tagaq, *Retribution* LP
4. Bridge And Tunnel, *Indoor Voices* EP
5. Lawrence Arms, *Cocktails and Dreams* LP

Tim Brooks

• Primal Rite, *Sensory Link to Pain* EP
• Power Trip, *Nightmare Logic* LP
• Martyrdod, *List* LP
• Rixe, *Bapteme De Feu* EP
• Fatigue, *Scab* EP

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed
1. *The Wailing*
2. *Over the Garden Wall*
3. *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*
4. *The Innocents*
5. *The Barkley Marathons*

Todd Taylor

• Cyanide Pills, *Sliced and Diced* LP
• Marriage Material demo
• Crusades, *This Is a Sickness, and Sickness Will End* LP
• *Be Your Own Backing Band* by Liz Prince (book) tie *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (book)
• Western Addiction, *Tremulous* LP

Tricia Ramos

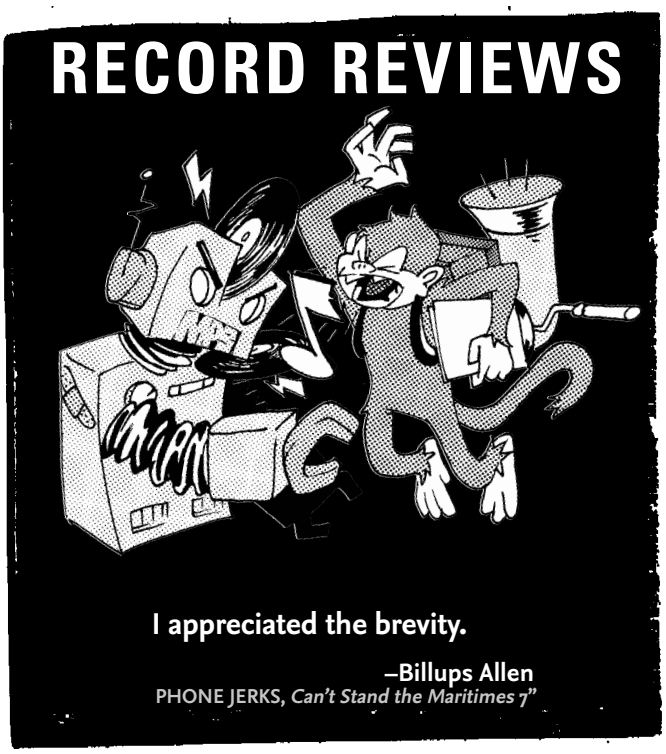
1. Watching *Hard Ticket to Hawaii* for the first time
2. Quaaludes benefit show for Jonnycat
3. Preening show at The Know
4. The Coathangers show at Mississippi Studios
5. Vog, *Maximum EyeRoll* CS

1125:
***Tysiac Sto Dwadziescia Piec:* 2 x LP**
Monstrous double disc retrospective of one Poland's premier straight edge hardcore bands. Going since 1996, they have been sticking to the NYHC blueprint: tough hardcore with more than a nod to Madball and later Agnostic Front. All the lyrics are in Polish so they could be singing about eating cats, but judging by the photos of high leaps in sports gear I'm guessing it's songs about friendship and vengeance. This compiles the band's earliest records from '97/'99. It's pretty raw, fast, and hardcore. If you are a fan of Polish stuff or a hardcore super nerd, dig in. For me? I don't need it. –Tim Brooks (Pasazer)

156: *Memento Mori:* 10" EP
True "industrial" music is a bit of a challenge to review—how does one assess what is often essentially a collection of noise, some occasionally culled from recordings of working machines, hunks of sheet metal being bashed, and the like? Still, I must profess a fondness for the stuff, and this is no exception. A collection of recordings utilizing only instruments made from human bones, this howls, whispers, squeals, and clangs in a variety of deliveries that are at times fascinating and unsettling. Not the kind of listening that involves bobbing heads and singing along, this is more about introspection and mood evocation. It ain't for everyone, but it is worth the effort for those interested in something a bit off the beaten path. –Jimmy Alvarado (156, onefivesix.bandcamp.com)

99ERS / DARLINGTON: Split: 7" 33
Christy Darlington was an enigmatic minor star of '90s pop punk; nobody could really figure out what that dude was all about (or was sufficiently mobilized to inspect the matter in depth), and I got to admit I giggled a little when I saw they/he were/was still at it, lo some twenty years later. Be that as it may, "Mars Rover" is like a dirty Archies song, so stupid and catchy and infectious that you'll be singing it to yourself all the while you beat Christy's face in with a waffle iron for writing it. "Dress Code" is a bit more on the nose, but still serviceable. On the flip, the 99ers—*just two points off the torrid pace established by the 101ers!*—sound like a newly-excavated link between Helen Love and the Queers, trading off girl/boy vocals not at all unlike the contents of a Fay Fife/Eugene box of Rezillo-flavored Nerds®, managing to name-drop *Das Kapital*, North Star Roller Derby, and the Mr. T Experience in the span of two songs. I hate to say this, but I think I love this. BEST SONG: 99ers, "Rude Girl T-Shirt." BEST SONG TITLE: Darlington, "Mars Rover." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The first WFTDA playoff tournament game I ever announced was North Star vs. Grand Raggidy. –Rev. Nørb (Man Della / Ratgirl / Jerkoff, mandellarecords.com)

RECORD REVIEWS



I appreciated the brevity.

–Billups Allen
PHONE JERKS, *Can't Stand the Maritimes 7"*

ABORTTI 13: *Kansa Tasiteli:* 7"
The note this Finnish band included says they've been at it for thirty-five years. Based on the songs herein, I believe it: throughout, Abortti 13 prove masters of the form, whether playing mid-tempo 1977-style punk or blistering hardcore. It's a joy to hear such love for the genre coming through in the music, which concerns itself with war, fear of the unknown, and (you guessed it) Christopher Lee. –Michael T. Fournier (abortti13@gmail.com)

ACRYLICS: *Despair:* 7'
"Despair" starts off stompin', gets artsy-weird, gets a bit thrashy, then backs out in reverse order. "Reassurance" vacillates between full-bore thrash and slower, more structurally complex parts that brood and burn. Sound's appropriately blown out, the delivery is on point, and a good single is in the offing. –Jimmy Alvarado (Iron Lung)

AQUARIAN BLOOD:
***Last Nite in Paradise:* LP**
It took me a bit to remember that before Aquarian Blood there was Moving Finger, featuring future members of Aquarian Blood. Then I remembered that I slept on the Moving Finger 7". Then I remembered I missed both Aquarian Blood 7"s. I've had to make all sorts of adult decisions with my money, and it's put me super far behind in my record buying! I've seen Aquarian Blood a few times and grabbed *Last Nite in Paradise* when they came through my town. Live, Aquarian Blood is all intense energy, a bit psych-y but not wholly psych. And more than a little creepy and intimidating at times. I wondered how this would translate to record. The first few spins of *Last Nite in Paradise* had me thinking the recording was a little too lo-fi to capture all the background subtleties. This ain't no dig, 'cause I really dig Aquarian Blood, and I almost never prefer something regular-fi over lo-fi. It's the creepy extra sound effects Aquarian Blood use that puts them over the top, and that stuff can be lost in lower fidelity recordings. Subsequent spins reveal new textures, all the better played louder. There are a few garage punkers ("Get Wet," "Cold Foreign Advisor," "Sex Is Pure/Love Is Blind") but the more haunting songs ("Skinsuit," Won't Forget to Die") add an uneasy quality that maybe make you question your moral compass for liking this record. Vocals are slurred by reverb, so it's hard to make out all the words, but frontwoman Laurel's delivery is powerful, in a "how does she not burst a blood vessel?" kind of way. I'm still not sure if the chorus to "Blood Chant" is "she drinks Aquarian blood" but maybe it's better not to know. –Sal Lucci (Goner)

ARTEFACT: *Votive Offering:* LP
Alongside Sweden's Vånna Inget and Hurula, Artefact, from Cardiff, Wales, provide a noteworthy entry in the goth-kissed post-punk revival on their debut LP. The ten songs sonically fuse contemporary bands like Arctic Flowers and Wild Moth with '80s anarcho such as The Mob and Zounds. The sparse verses tensely build to cathartic choruses, giving vocalist Hannah enough room to croon among the best: Siouxsie Sioux, Exene Cervenka, Peter Murphy. Her vocals exude a cool, fearless swagger that accentuates the swirling guitar, taut rhythms, and hypnotic bass lines. The lead riff on "The Morrigan" sounds like it could be right off The Cure's *The Head on the Door*, and "Witching Hour" and "Libracide" speed up the tempo and turn on the attitude, exploring territory previously traversed by Lost Cherrees and Rubella Ballet. But "Boudicca," a sprawling epic, opens with a harmonic-laden bass intro and anguished lyrics ("Thrown to the wolves / Howls echo still") before engulfing the listener in a wave of distortion. Artefact's marriage of post-punk, goth, and anarcho is a match made in heaven. –Sean Arenas (Adagio 830, adagio830.de)

ATLANTES: *Adamastor:* 7" EP
Oi of French/Portuguese extraction with the requisite football-chanty bits, gruff vocals, and so on. Its saving graces are some good guitar lines atop well-constructed songs that, while no longer my cup of tea, are nonetheless potent. –Jimmy Alvarado (Spirit Of The Streets)

BASK: *American Hollow:* LP
No other band can weave Americana with psychedelia and stoner rock as cohesively as BASK. Hailing from the mountains of Asheville, N.C., the four-piece outfit has concocted a sound truly all its own. Each track is a progressive buildup that opens with simple acoustic chords, gradually adds heavier layers, and culminates in a monstrous, screaming finale. Not unlike the mountains themselves, BASK's songs deliver rewarding summits that are well worth the long ascensions. The band was invited to open for stoner rock giants High On Fire across Europe last summer and came back from tour still humble enough to play the same small venues in which they accrued their first fans. Just listening to this record makes you feel like you've gotten some stuff off your chest, and the live show never fails to be a good time. –Michelle Kirk (Self-Aware)

BEAR TRADE: *Silent Unspeakable:* LP
This, the second long player from Bear Trade, finds me in a position of straining every sinew of my being to remain objective. It's not easy though, as I love this band. I love its sound, its songs, and its live experience. So, with that out of the way, here goes. This album is an out and out belter, and I promise that's with my objective hat firmly on my head! The guitars resonate with a beautifully warm quality whilst the bass and drums add to that sense of being enveloped by a loved one. *Silent Unspeakable* is chock full of quality tunes featuring wry, reflective, and witty lyrics whilst sounding like a new old friend. It stands shoulder to shoulder with the excellent debut album *Blood & Sand*. Oof! –Rich Cocksedge (Everything Sucks / Dead Broke)

BELLICOSE MINDS, THE:
***The Creature:* 12" LP**
"Bellicose" means aggressive or hostile—and this three-piece delivers unromantic, expansive, political post-punk. Lyric themes cover drug addiction, oligarchy, and staring into the abyss, delivered with enough reverb to sound like it was recorded

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in a cavernous underground bunker. B-side track "A Likely Outcome" is about nuclear annihilation; you do the math. Looking forward to more pre-apocalyptic, anarcho-gothic cultural commentary for the next four years, especially if it sounds this good. –Cheyenne Neckmonster (Black Water)

BETTY MACHETE & THE ANGRY COUGARS: *"Meetings" b/w "Pissed Again": 7"*
A hair too slick for me production-wise, but I have a soft spot for Columbus, OH and the songs on this 7" are fast ragers (total running time: maybe two minutes) and, frankly, I hate meetings, too. I appreciate full-time job angst in music. A decent Aggravators cover on the B side, as well. The handwritten note accompanying the record was written on the back of a copied, autographed photo of Christina Lindberg. I like this band. –Matt Werts (Dull-Fi)

BITTER GROUNDS: *Hollowlands:* CD
This debut album from Amsterdam's Bitter Grounds is a catchy, highly produced release. They play streetpunk reminiscent of what was popular during the 1990s explosion of that subgenre. Its members have been in bands for over twenty years, so there's an undeniable maturity to the lyrics. The singer has a unique expressiveness, which, coupled with his annunciation, makes for an excellent vocal track. This CD is potentially commercial, without lacking any integrity whatsoever. It's definitely an album worth seeking out. Sometimes not reinventing the wheel strengthens the wheel, and Bitter Grounds gets that not so subtle point. –Art Ettinger (Nextpunk)

BIZNAGA: *Sentido del Espectáculo:* CD
I'm gonna call this '78 punk. It's more muscular than breakneck, with confident melodies, punchy dynamics, and some encroaching post-punk darkness. Think *Give 'em Enough Rope* instead of the self-titled Clash album. Biznaga really sells this sound with well-written songs, and an energy that makes the whole deal feel fresh. They are from Madrid, Spain, and their lyrics are in Spanish. Stick "Mediocridad y Confort" on a playlist between The Adverts and Something Fierce. –Chris Terry (slovenly.com)

BLEEDING GUMS: *II: 7"* EP
Several short blasts of (mostly) mid-tempo punk rawkin' that are aggressive, not too sloppy yet not too tight, and in no way polished. Longest tune is an epic minute-twenty-eight. Glorious. –Jimmy Alvarado (Neck Chop)

BLOWINS: Self-titled: LP
Blowins from Poland take a page from the book of the Estranged, melding the darkest of melodies with punk-as-all-fuck viciousness and some great, snarling Jack Grisham-esque vocals. The lyrics are in their native Polish but have been graciously translated to English for us to understand just how fucking pissed they are. Rager=keeper. –Juan Espinosa (Pasazer)

BOBBY PERU: *20th Century Masters:* CS
I mostly picked up this cassette because they had songs called "Bath Salt Boogie" and "Garbage Creep 2." I mean, who doesn't want to know what *those* sound like?? (Turns out, pretty good actually.) The vocalist found the sweet spot in a Venn diagram between Jello Biafra and Guy Picciotto, and I mean that in the best way possible. –Cheyenne Neckmonster (Self-released)

BOMBPOPS, THE: *Fear of Missing Out:* CD
The Bombpops have been kicking around SoCal for so long; I can't believe this is really their first full-length release. Longtime fans will be completely stoked. The elements of their sound you know and love are here but now with a noticeable upgrade in the rhythm section, songwriting, and production. Seeing them live will just make you smile, and gladly this CD does much of the same. I predict "CA in July" will be on many a playlist this summer and rightfully so. I was also happy to see the band venture into somewhat thrashier material with songs like "Brake Lights" and "Marry. Fuck. Kill." In short? Fucking great. –Garrett Barnwell (Fat)

BRAD POT: Self-titled: LP
Thrashy and trashy garage bashing from this young Australian band. The hooks blast like a new one-hitter and the singer sounds like a less-coked Jay Reatard. Eleven songs, each of which make me want to fall off a skateboard. –Chris Terry (slovenly.com)

BRAIN VACATION: *Nuclear Retort:* LP
Brain Vacation plays hardcore punk in the vein of… well, every other hardcore band you can think of. Let's face it: if you are looking for a hardcore record, you aren't waiting to see who can really expand the genre. On *Nuclear Retort*, the fat is trimmed, the songs are fast, and the band is fucking pissed. I like this record a lot. We live in desperate times when bands like this are more than welcome. No time to bullshit. Gimme the truth fast and loud. –Jon Mule (Wall Of Youth)

BREAKDOWN: *'97 Demo:* LP
One of the most crucial hardcore demos of the late '80s finally sees 12" wax after being dubbed by tape traders across the world for the past three decades. There was a 7" version moons ago, but Painkiller and 540 have upped the ante, cleaned it up, added a live radio set, liner notes, and some well-worn memories of the band. This demo was the precursor to any heavy East Coast hardcore you have heard: thick and heavy mosh parts, guitar dive bombs, and fast and furious breaks. This shit was the blueprint. While all the suburbs were lousy with sports-gear-wearing straight edge dorks, Breakdown were the NYC deal. Songs about getting high and beating your ass. Hard music for hard people. Mandatory. –Tim Brooks (Painkiller, painkillerrecords.com)

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BUILDINGS:
***You Are Not One of Us:* LP/CD**
Building's last album, *MELT CRY SLEEP*, blew me away with its boisterous noise, reminiscent at times of both Big Black and The Jesus Lizard. The follow up matches its predecessor in style and substance, laying down a host of mesmerising bass lines, whilst the drums switch between providing guidance to subjecting the listener to battery and assault. Alongside this, the guitar and vocals scratch away maniacally to ensure that it's impossible to find any serenity by way of this, or any, Buildings recording. Although I really have to be in the right mood to let myself be assailed by this, when I am, it's definitely time well spent. –Rich Cocksedge (Antena Krzyku / Gilead Media)

BURN HOUSES: Self-titled: CD
Burn Houses is the recording project of Houston area musician/artist Jon Patrick. I've seen Jon playing in a number of punk bands over the years, but with this project he's taking a more laid back indie rock approach to songwriting. Not completely unlike the Mark Edwards-fronted project/band My Dad Is Dead—whose early records were all completely played by Mark and which all showed some definite Joy Division influence—these songs are all written and performed by Jon and also at times channel some Joy Division sounds in their style and delivery. I can hear quite a bit of The Cure in these songs too, from the varied use of more sparse, shimmery guitar leads to other times including layers and layers of differently textured sounds. When used correctly, repetition can be a songwriter's best friend, and Burn Houses does repetition perfectly. –Mark Twistworthy (Sinkhole Texas)

BUZZCOCKS, THE: *Spiral Scratch/ Time's Up Box Set:* LP/CD
Super lavish reissue of the band's debut single, along with a set of demos that were heavily bootlegged at the time. The *Scratch* single has been widely heralded as the first DIY punk single. Maybe The Saints beat them by a hair, but that's debatable. Produced by Martin Hannett (pre-Joy Division), most of the songs recorded were first takes. It sold out its initial pressing of 1,000 and would go on to sell over 16,000. *Time's Up* was recorded quickly as well, featuring mostly originals except for a Captain Beefheart and Troggs cover. But this lineup was doomed. Howard Devoto left the band after eleven gigs, much to the relief of Steve Diggle, who had no desire to play bass guitar. This box set collects all this information and more in a beautiful package. You can get these two releases separately if you desire. But this is a box set done right. Grab it if you can. –Sean Koepenick (Domino, dominorecordco.com)

CAMP COPE: Self-titled: EP
Any band that's friends with indie darling Courtney Barnett is bound to impress, and Camp Cope didn't let me down. Frontlady Georgia "Maq" McDonald sings with gut-wrenching emotion that could rip the toughest dude around to his core. Think Aussie Alanis Morissette with splashier drum fills, electric guitar riffs, and less pop-friendly song structures. Anyone who has ever felt ping-ponged between the redemption and desolation that come with newfound solitude will relate to the album's stories. The trio from Melbourne, Australia, released its self-titled EP on Earth Day in 2016, a fitting choice given the record's sociopolitical themes. –Michelle Kirk (Poison City)

CAREER SUICIDE:
***Machine Response:* LP/CD**
Ten years is a long time between albums but listening to *Machine Response* shows that Career Suicide has dropped seamlessly straight back into the hardcore groove. This is a band where power is attained more from sinewy muscle rather than being bulked up to the eyeballs on steroids. It's no big shock that an outfit featuring Jonah Falco can write songs that take occasional tangential shifts like one of his other bands, Fucked Up, achieves, hence adding to the exciting musical escapades. "Blank Expression" is the killer track and at first I was convinced it was a cover but it's self-penned and serves as a perfect example of the variety found on this album with a 1970s punk/new wave feel. A welcome return, indeed. –Rich Cocksedge (Deranged / Static Shock)

CASTET:
***Twardsi Niż Najtwardsza Garda:* LP**
Castet have been playing 1980s-sounding New York hardcore since 2003, but what makes it so exciting is that they're from Poland. This type of hardcore gets a lot of flak, but its global appeal shows that it has a universality to it that cannot be disputed. Pasażer is a label that always puts together fancy packaging, with this LP being no exception. It comes in an embossed cover that folds out and has a printed inner sleeve as well. Fans sick of domestic "tough guy" hardcore should consider checking this awesome record out to reenergize their love for what remains one of punk's most genuine subcategories. –Art Ettinger (Pasażer)

CENTURY PALM: *Meet You:* LP
Canadian pop-wave with synths bubbling under, over, and around jangle-slash guitars. There's a "Wire via later Middle Class" sheen, with a bit more pop than those bands dared, on songs like "These Walls," while other corners have a bit more Units to 'em. Icy, not offensively arty, this'll do ye just fine. –Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

CHEAP CASSETTES, THE:
***All Anxious, All the Time:* CD**
This is a radio-friendly band with a real underwhelming Vibrators cover. Mid-tempo, cookie cutter rock riffs with drumming so slow you might want to make sure the percussionist is still awake. They're self proclaimed as "high energy, lo-fi garage," though I'd

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venture they're more of a "low energy, hi-fi band." It's one of those things where everyone knows the singer sucks, but they let him sing because he wrote all the lyrics. And speaking of which, how does one find the balls to write a song called "Sieg Heil (Means I Love You)," 'cus I'm pretty sure it still doesn't. There's some Chuck Berry and some Elvis Costello, but completely zapped of the passion or energy. I'm a huge Groovie Ghoulies fan because they manage to use Berry as a foundation for spirited pop punk songs about monsters. But much like a vampire with a bad dentist, The Cheap Cassettes really lack a bite. Sorry guys, I just need a little more umph and a touch of danger in my rock'n'roll. Also, obvious question, but why was this not released as a cheap cassette? –Kayla Greet (Rum Bar)

CHEST PAIN:
***The Primate's Advantage:* 7"**
The immortal words of English philosopher Thomas Hobbes are particularly appropriate when describing Austin, Texas's Chest Pain: "nasty, brutish, and short." I am still recovering from their punishing LP *Weltschmerz*, which gave me heart palpitations. Their latest 7" solidifies their penchant for uncompromising aural assaults. The vocalist menacingly grunts like Joe Denunzio of Infest without coming off constipated, and the feedback shrieks—particularly on Side A's "The Primate's Advantage"—a discordant powerviolence epic. The drummer remarkably keeps up with the stampeding tempos and the bassist holds it all together with his bowl-loosening low end, recalling the glory days of Slap-a-Ham Records. The band argues "the primate's advantage" is "to destroy as it creates." Oddly enough, Chest Pain is the sound of devolution: totally fucking savage. –Sean Arenas (To Live A Lie / Mind Ripper / Crucificados)

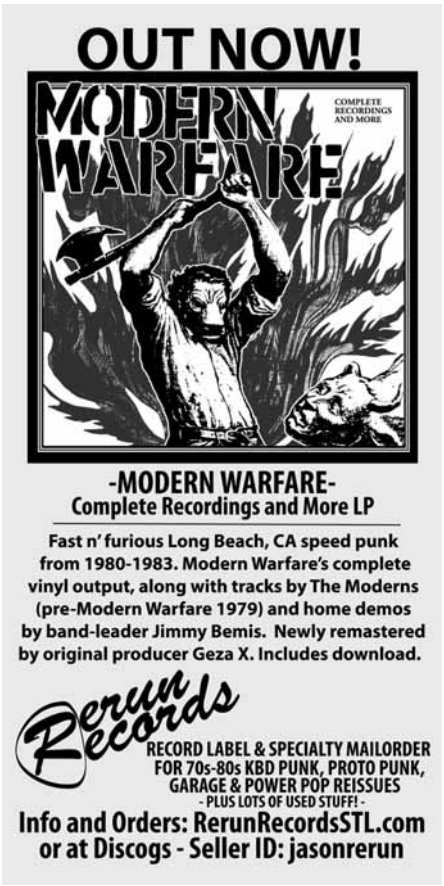
CHICA NEGRA: *Luck of the Seven:* CD
Lotta different ingredients dipped from different pots—little bits of punk, surf, western, early Bay Area wave, jazz, and Link Wray rumble mixed into a rock base. The results aren't bad, but nonetheless lack a level of punch that would serve well to make things stick better, not to mention some stirring of the influences to render them a bit less obvious. Promising, and I'm interested in where they go from here. –Jimmy Alvarado (Mystery School)

CINEMA CINEMA: *Man Bites Dog:* CD
This is like jumping into a ball pit at a sci-fi convention, only all the balls are freakish little orbs with eyes—murderous spheres from *Phantasm*, and Lament Configurations from *Hellraiser*—all the while lasers and smoke machines are going off. Listening to this record is chilling and dread-inducing, but you can't turn away from it. Alongside those feelings of unchecked anxiety are alluring mysteries to uncover. I feel the same way with this record as I do the *Blade Runner* soundtrack. Am I making more movie references than music ones because of their band name? Probably. But it's seriously like an audio version of *Videodrome* with a strong affinity for The Refused. I mean, there's so much chaos going on here that it's difficult to really capture it in a review. Hardcore break downs, speed metal guitars, creepy soundscapes, brutal vocals, evil laughter, saxophone, and more are there for the taking. I haven't felt this ill at ease since I walked through a WWII air raid shelter alone in the tunnels of Cardiff Keep in Wales. My advice is if you can't handle things that go bump in the night, don't attempt this—even in the daylight. It's art rock made by Cenobites and it fucking rules. All of this from a two-piece band is real impressive. Plus their album art is some of the most beautiful I've seen in a long while. –Kayla Greet (Dullest, Labelship)

CITIZEN BLAST KANE:
***Straight to Videodisc:* LP**
This sounds like all the shit on all the shelves in all the basements in North America falling violently onto unfinished cement floors while Chris Montez stands off to the side in the resulting dust cloud occasionally playing one-handed keyboard with a crudely manufactured hook. Alternately, this also sounds like music that the Dictators' grandkids would play to aggravate their parents. There's always room in my heart for New Jersey. And sandwich meat. BEST SONG: "Fastball" which is not the Sugarloaf song. BEST SONG TITLE: Either "Salisbury Shake" or "Sweatpants Lament." NOW do you understand? FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: There are eighteen slices of sandwich meat visible on the back cover, but only three on the front. I think that means Paul McCartney is dead. –Rev. Nørb (Self-released)

CLEAN SHIRTS: *Marginal:* 7"
Edgy punk rock which jerks along in a stop/start kind of way. The trebly, surf-like guitar lays down choppy riffs whilst the rhythm section fills in the gaps without taking up all the space in the recording. I am surprised that Clean Shirts comes from North Yorkshire and not somewhere like the musical hotbed of Denton, TX as this fits in with a lot that I have heard coming from that city. There are seven tracks crammed onto this single and no one in their right mind would class any of them as filler. –Rich Cocksedge (Kids Of The Lughole)

CONCEALED BLADE: Self-titled: 12"
I don't know a good way to talk about this record without sounding hyperbolic. I don't know a good way to touch on the "recommended if you likes" without having to say that they are actually better than their influences. This is twenty straight minutes of fucking *riffs*—any one of which would have individually been the crowning achievement of your favorite local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hardcore band, but in the hands of these monsters is just another one in a series of slams and dives. Speaking of dives, there is a dive bomb every eight seconds. Fans of the band members' previous projects (Creem, Hounds Of Hate, et cetera) would be at home here, but this is honestly a record I can put on to shut up the fake punx that tell me hardcore has been downhill since *Age of Quarrel*. –Ian Wise (Beach Impediment)

CROWD, THE: *Surf Ghetto Riot—Big Waves and Wipeouts 1994-2014:* LP
The first time I heard The Crowd it was on a beat-up cassette gifted to me by my pal Dustin Jak. I was simultaneously thrown into a world of beach punk that I hadn't heard before and introduced one of my all time favorite record labels: Hostage Records. The Crowd blew me away. They had so many albums, and for a band that had been around for ages, they sounded so fresh. I snapped up everything that came out, always waiting with baited breath for their new record that was always promised, but never appeared…. Until now…. Sort of. *Surf Ghetto Riot* is a comprehensive collection of rare, post-'80s Crowd music. From long out-of-print 7"s, to compilation tracks, to never released recordings. I will go on record right here and right now to say that their cover of "Solitary Confinement" is better that the original. Hostage really pulled out all the stops on this one. Of course, I went for the "art damaged" version with the killer screenprinted cover, the "Beach Blvd. Blue" vinyl and the dust jacket signed by all the members from over the years. Those might be all gone, but there are other versions out there, and you know you need this in your collection. –Ty Stranglehold (Hostage, hostagerecords.com)

CRUSADES: *This Is a Sickness and Sickness Will End:* LP
Admittedly this is very selfish, but I just wish Skottie Lobotomy would sing in every band—not just the myriad of ones he's already in. There's just something so gorgeous and painful about the tones he carries, which is blissfully perfect for this third full length from Ottawa darlings Crusades. Well-known for challenging organized religion in their lyrics; as a whole, this record takes a small departure from that theme. It instead focuses strongly on grief, death, and remorse without a "higher power" to find peace with. In no way do they rest on their laurels, but instead amplify what they are aces at: building a wall of sound to create intense, atmospheric music. For those of you who want more of a return to their first record, "1866 (Porch and Portal)" is it. The track—just before it ends with stark guitar melodies—pulls in what sounds like a timpani that creates tension, and bleeds into a full-force pummeling with angsty, thrashy punk. Dave Williams is no slouch vocally either, and certainly brings this song to heightened aggression, before easing off the gas to end with a gorgeous refrain ("How long will / How long will we carry on?") with stringed instruments. Each track is named after and pulls from poems that Williams handpicked as exemplary bouts with losing loved ones. The record as a whole is wonderfully cathartic. Two stunning color variants exist depending on what part of the world you order it from. Both come in a lovely gatefold vinyl with a full lyric sheet. –Kayla Greet (Anxious & Angry / Countless Altars)

CRYSTAL FAIRY: Self-titled: CD
When I first heard about the forming of this supergroup and the release of their self-titled debut album, I was intrigued. Crystal Fairy is made up of Buzz Osborne and Dale Crover from the Melvins, Omar Rodriguez-Lopez from At the Drive-In and the Mars Volta, and has Terri Gender Bender from Le Butcherettes on vocals. How could I not be excited? Each one of those very talented people has done something that I am a fan of, especially Buzz and Dale of the Melvins, whose thirty-four years and more than twenty albums worth of music have been so important to me and countless other fans of their ventures into punk rock and doom-stoner-sludge metal. Certainly, Crystal Fairy must be at least as good as the sum of their parts, right? Wrong. On paper, Crystal Fairy should be creating fuzzy, psychedelic, garage punk masterpieces. But the end result, sadly, feels much less inspired and much more '90s rock revival with cookie cutter songs and predictable guitar solos. Sadly, I am not a fan. Now, where is my copy of *Stoner Witch*? –Jon Mule (Ipecac, ipecac.com)

CYANIDE PILLS: *Sliced and Diced:* LP *"Big Mistake" b/w "My Baby's become a Right Wing Extremist": 7"*
Unfortunately, I'm just learning about this band. Goddamn, this album comes across as one long hook. Catchy and infectious with witty, tenderly crass lyrics. It picks you up and pulls you down in a way that only masterfully crafted albums can. Often times power pop's "easy come, easy go" attitude can be its greatest attribute and its worst detriment, but with songs like these, this record isn't going anywhere soon. Pick it up and have some goddamn fun for once. –Daryl (Damaged Goods)

CYCLOPS: *Escape from Cyclops Island:* LP
This is a concept album from a two-person concept band dedicated to the one-eyed monster of Greek mythology. I did not expect to like it (see previous sentence), but the fuzzy guitars and playful lyrics ("I can see what I want to see…") got their groovy hooks deep inside me. Even as I look to wrap up this short review, I want to flip the record again and keep listening. It makes me want to dance around the living room in my underwear. Maybe I'll invite the neighbors! This one is begging for a party! –Jon Mule (Jonny Cat)

D.O.C.: *Parched Dredge: 7"* EP
Not to be confused with the N.W.A.-affiliated rapper who's gone by this

moniker since, at the very least, the mid-1980s, this D.O.C. pumps out potent grind with metallic slivers buried in the geetars. Songs come and go in a blur with a wee bit more sophistication than others. –Jimmy Alvarado (Iron Lung)

DANGÜS TARKÜS:
***Rock N' Roll for the People:* LP**
Dangüs Tarküs is the brainchild of one half of the excellent pop punk miscreants the Muff Divers and whose previous release—the stellar synth-punk *Binky Boy* 7"—was an unexpected new wave treat to my ears. *Rock N' Roll for the People* is a basement punk rock album which would certainly appeal to fans of Nobunny, the Spits, and the Goner records-style punk spectrum of bands, but is also stylistically a far cry from the previously mentioned *Binky Boy* record. It's got plenty of rock'n'roll hooks and lo-fi punk accessibility to satiate the needs of most new wave/punk mutant types. While it is a valiant effort of an album, it just wasn't the swimming pool of new wave tomfoolery I was preparing to immerse myself in. –Juan Espinosa (Dig!)

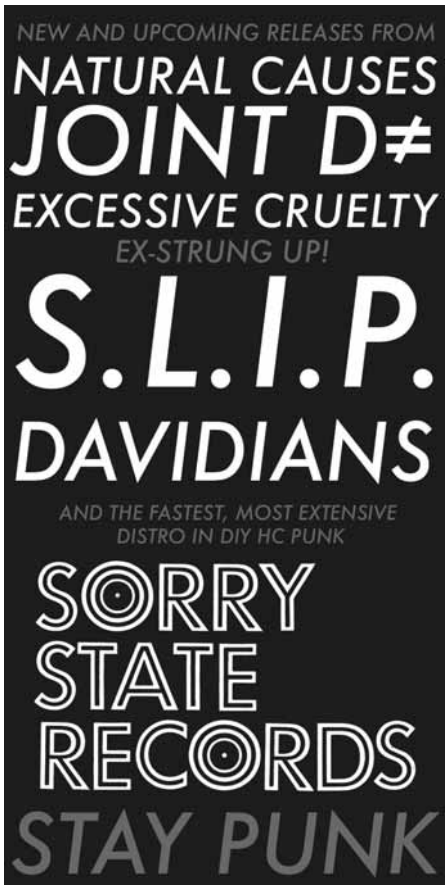
DATE NIGHT WITH BRIAN:
Self-titled: CD
This three piece consists of friends Ean, Reba, and Brian from bands such as Sicko, The Cripples, and Primate 5, respectively. At the time they started playing music, Ean and Reba (a married couple) were using their date nights to practice with Brian, hence the band name! Musically, they branch off the tree of '90s college rock, citing Sonic Youth, Guided By Voices, and Dinosaur jr. as main influences. Their song "Anywhere" also reminds me of R.E.M.'s "It's the End of the World" because of the breakneck speed of the lyric delivery in the verses. Within this five-song EP there's quite a bit of fuzz and distortion, plus male and female harmonies. I love it when drummers sing in bands, and Reba is no exception. The melodies this trio produces, compounded with lyrical imagery, is ripe for listening on a carefree, sunny day. Even the second track, "Supervisor," takes a lighthearted spin on not wanting to be at work when they sing, "I won't be in today / We all need time away." You can truly feel the love in this room with this EP playing on your stereo, making it perfect for a date night with anyone – even if it's just yourself. –Kayla Greet (Top Drawer)

DAVEY DYNAMITE: *Holy Shit:* LP
Having "HOLY SHIT" in six-inch lettering on the cover of your LP will stop and gather attention. But there's always the chance that it could just be a diversionary tactic away from sub-par tunes trapped in the grooves. Luckily, Davey Dynamite has had three solo releases to hone his craft before unleashing this fourth LP (first featuring a full band), full of fleshed-out storytelling and rock-solid tunes to back it up. Lyrics and a voice straddling a line between Craig Finn (The Hold Steady) or Josh Caterer (The Smoking Popes), a heart screaming lyrics with a Bloomington bent, and a band following him, able to rock reflectively and yet unafraid to unleash their inner-Brokedowns. Recommended Chi-town punk. –Matt Seward (Don't Panic)

DAVID ARVEDON:
***The White Album:* 2 x LP**
In the grand pantheon of oddball singer-songwriter types, David Arvedon is certainly plenty quirky—trouble is, he's not truly *out there* enough to qualify as a legit outsider artist *a la* Wesley Willis, Jad Fair, or David Johnston, and he's not really enough of a sharpshooter to pass himself off as an eccentric Laurice type. As a result, he winds up coming across—at least on this double album of (presumably) new material—as a cross between a poor man's Captain Beefheart and the Surf Punks. It's competent, weird pop-rock that never astounds with competency nor weirdness—in point of fact, the album is nowhere near as weird as its 1968 namesake. In many cases, the weirdness aspect of things just bloats an otherwise decent tune with Zappa-esque indulgence—a lot of these songs are four or five minutes long when two or three would have done just fine. That said, most of these songs would sound decent scattered throughout the length and breadth of a college radio playlist, but if you're looking to get sucked into someone else's psyche for an hour or so and then spat out a changed and enriched being, look elsewhere, pilgrim. BEST SONG: I seemed to enjoy the first two or three minutes of "Gooniest Girl." BEST SONG TITLE: "Gooniest Girl." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: David Arvedon would like to thank "the dead, maggot infested pigeon in the gutter at the corner of Clarendon St. and Commonwealth Avenue in downtown Boston, who had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the production of this album." –Rev. Nørb (Almost Ready)

DAVIDIANS: *City Trends:* LP
A full-sized onslaught from these cats this time 'round. Like predecessors Die Kreuzen, Killing Joke, B'last and others, they strive to turn what some view as lowbrow "noise" into high art. The thrashy tempos are largely replaced with heavy influences culled from post-punk's more dissonant corners, with odd time signatures, odder structures, and a heap of white-knuckle tension delivered with precision. Engaging from the first and worth every minute spent locked in its web. –Jimmy Alvarado (Sorry State)

DEADLOCK / FILL INS: Split: 7"
This appears to be a split single from two bands from the state of North Carolina. Despite cover art that looks to be total thrash revival, Deadlock bring some Agnostic Front vibes to the table and mixes that with a sound that seems to be very Bridge Nine style hardcore. The Fill Ins have some Rat Fink parody style artwork and come across like a very, very clean Nashville



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Pussy or Hookers. Seems a lot like hardcore kids have grown into rock. –Mike Frame (No Profit)

DEATHWISH: *Unleash Hell:* CD
I'm introduced to Deathwish with a ram sporting a pentagram and a motto: "Rock n' Roll's One Hell of a Drug." There's a whole host of drug metaphors I could run with here, but any sort of upper that adds additional teeth to straightforward thrash/speed punk sensibilities would work. Wisconsin-rooted and Discharge-inspired, this is stuff that works for background music when I need to get an unwanted task done. –Theresa W. (Beer City)

DESPERO:
***Somewhere Near the Bottom:* CD**
La Escalera has a strong roster of melodic punk bands and Despero does nothing to dilute that current pool. *Somewhere Near the Bottom* ticks a whole bunch of boxes for me: a big wall of guitars; crisp, battering drums; gruff vocals; and some really sumptuous tunes. In fact, my only criticism would be that I could do with a couple more tracks, as this only features nine. Minor gripe aside, this is a great listen which gets me all pumped up and bouncing on the balls of my feet. –Rich Cocksedge (La Escalera)

DEVIOUS ONES: *Djarum Summers:* 7"
This record offers a quick blast of great punk/power pop energy in these two songs, with a light sprinkling of garage punk scuzz over the top. Recorded by Detroit's top garage punk hitmaker Jim Diamond, he—along with the band—gives these sickeningly catchy power punk songs some teeth. The result is perfect, tuneful, and catchy-as-fuck songs that I can't get out of my head. Seriously, I found the chorus to the song "Court Clothes" stuck in my head hours after listening to it. Good stuff. –Mark Twistworthy (Rust On The Blade, rustontheblade@gmail.com)

DEZERTER: *Jak Powtryzmalem III Wojne Swiatowa Czyli Nieznana Historia Desertera:* LP
Stop what you are doing and buy this record. Now that we're there, let's talk about what you just bought. Dezerter were one of the earliest Polish punk bands. They released a 7" in '83 of fantastic hardcore-influenced punk and then went on an illustrious career that spanned several albums. They're gritty and melodic, and they were politically active in a way that was actually dangerous. This release is a compilation of odds-and-ends spanning from 1981 to the mid-'90s and shows their considerable amount of range. There is some filler material but even that's important because it's interesting to see how they progressed as more influences were brought into their sound. Recommended if you are into good international punk (Eskorbuto, Ebba Gron) or are trying to test out the waters of punk outside the U.S./U.K. comfort zone. Also, great packaging. Liner notes are in both Polish and English. –Ian Wise (Pasazer)

DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN, THE: *Dissociation:* CD/LP
The latest (and final) release from the almighty Dillinger Escape Plan is eleven songs in fifty minutes. The sound is pretty similar to their past few albums, but with less electronic and lighter moments. More of *Dissociation* is hard-hitting and fast, which is preferable. The opener, "Limerent Death," may be one of their best songs ever, with singer Greg Puciato snarling and whining, "I gave you everything you wanted / you were everything to me" over and over, faster and faster until he just ends up screaming and the songs bursts back into a frenzied blitz before suddenly ending. Occasionally, the band reverts to the Faith No More influence they've displayed on their past few albums, but for the most part they keep up a furious, blistering pace. It's those intense, mosh-inducing parts that I've appreciated about the band (always bent toward the jazzy, off-beat rhythms) and *Dissociation* has more of those than not. Is it as amazing as 2004's *Miss Machine?* No. But it's a note the band can be proud to go out on. –Kurt Morris (Party Smasher Inc.)

DOGS, THE: *Slash Your Face:* 7" EP
A reissue of this seminal, yet *still* rockin' as fuck, Detroit-via-L.A. punk rock. The three tracks here haven't lost a whit of their power and ferocity despite the fact that the forty-year anniversary of the record's initial release is mere months away. Raw, feral, and stocked with swagger by the bucketload, this is one of those oft-overlooked gems that recalls all the best aspects of underage boozin' 'n' cruisin', knife fights, raising a ruckus, and just not giving a fuck about damned near anything but rock'n'roll. Thumbs way, way up for this seeing the light of day again. –Jimmy Alvarado (Last Laugh)

DREAMDECAY: *Yú:* LP
Deceptively destructive, Dreamdecay are the rumbling noise of a horde of tour vans traversing the scorched landscape. Safety is an illusion, contentment is denial, to stop questioning is to accept defeat. They're a band that feels incapable of writing an album that isn't a concept. Incapable of writing music without a groove. This is noise rock with a soul. Hardcore with a brain. See them live if at all possible, the way they start songs will have you gasping for air, and that's just the beginning. –Daryl (Iron Lung)

DRUX / VEUVE S.S.: *Split E.P.:* 7"
Drux from Germany kick out the fucking hardcore jams. The first track "Banned from the L Club" starts out sounding very Mob 47-ish and then mutates into some fierce youth crew-tinged stompcore on the following song "Mental Breakdown." France's Veuve S.S. reminds me an awful lot of Austin's Glue in that their brand of hardcore is also very groove oriented and unpredictable. Hardcore bands today are transparent, to say the least. You can smell the "mosh part" breakdowns coming a mile away,

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similar to the way the bass drops in EDM. Drux and Veuve S.S. are having none of that and, in turn, are creating some wildly inventive hardcore and putting so-called hardcore bands to shame. –Juan Espinosa (Nerd Core)

DUCHESS SAYS: *Anthologie des 3 Perchoirs / In a Fung Day T!:* CS
Holy shit, Duchess Says may be my new favorite band. This two-on-one cassette reminds me of all my best ex-boyfriends: sexy, weird, and super fucked up. On the one hand, Duchess Says' stuff sounds erratic and groovy, like Brainiac meets CSS. On the other, they sound like if Silver Apples fucked a demonic disco ball. These "Moog-punk" rockers from Montreal really got it going on, and they're really hard to describe. So just trust me on this one. –Simone Carter (Bonsound / Burger)

ECONOMY ISLAND: Self-titled: LP
I was at first thrown off by the name, since the name "Economy Island" sounds perhaps political, or possibly ironic. After listening to this super chill LP, I'm pretty sure they are neither. They have an indie sound; think 90's Weezer and Dinosaur Jr. but revised in the vein of Tony Molina (minus the Thin Lizzy shredding). Pleasant in a trancelike way; you'll find yourself getting lost in it. –Camylle Reynolds (Twistworthy)

EL BANDA: *Przejdzie Ci:* LP
In 2006, El Banda, from Warsaw, Poland, released *Przejdzie Ci*, which—if Google translate is accurate—means "you will get over it." Ten years later, Pasażer has reissued their debut, and the recently reformed group led a demonstration outside the Polish Parliament, protesting a proposed ban on abortion: El Banda still refuses to "get over it." Resistance electrifies the album's thirteen politically-charged songs, decrying the horrors of war, dehumanization, sexism, and urbanization: "Another skyscraper hurts the clouds." Although nearly verging on crust, their music harnesses the fury of Harum-Scarum but mediates it with the polished execution of Refused. The melodic guitar riffs accentuate Ania Zajdel's vitriolic vocals, and the propulsive drums never let up, leaving the listener exhausted. Whether it's Poland or Donald Trump's U.S., there's a lot to be pissed about in 2017, and it's galvanizing to know that El Banda is here to be a voice of dissent. –Sean Arenas (Pasażer, pasazer.pl)

EL BANDA: *Wściekłyszpaler: 7″*
Harrowing and bleak, El Banda continues to churn out music that can transport you to the most nightmarish of locations. This long-running Polish band excels at producing straight-forward melodic, dark Euro punk with adventurous, captivating nuances. Highly suggested for fans of Arctic Flowers or Masshysteri. Their discography is an experience which most bands fail to comprehend, never the less execute. Couldn't recommend this band more. –Daryl (Pasazer)

EXECUTIVES, THE: Self-titled: 7″
This is another Killed By Death band resurrected in full 7" form by the power of reissue. "Jet Set" is a dry guitar, three-chord smasher similar to The Dils and other California-bands from the '80s. The song appeared on KBD #10; #10 makes the list of KBD essentials. By the transitive property, this single is more of the same and very necessary. –Billups Allen (Rerun)

EXOTIC ADRIAN STREET AND THE PILE DRIVERS: *Shake Wrestle 'N' Roll:* CS
Reissue of the cult classic *Shake Wrestle 'N' Roll*, that's all glam'n'slam rock about breaking bones, sweet transvestites, and other important messages that deal with professional wrestling pomp and androgyny. It's awesome and utterly kitsch. –Camylle Reynolds (Burger)

F.O.D.: *Harvest:* LP/CD
At first sight I thought this was new material from Flag Of Democracy but it turned out that F.O.D. is from the Netherlands and happens to be one of the most proficient Bad Religion copyists I have ever heard. That's not intended to be a pejorative comment as, for the most part, it's done extremely well and I do like quite a lot of *Harvest*, the band's third album. There are moments where some of the songs veer away from that tried and tested formula. These are where I lose my way as they lack any noticeable point of interest. I don't know whether it's intentional or not, but I did pick up "epitaph" and "against the grain" amongst the lyrics, which only bolstered the impact that the veterans from California have on this record. –Rich Cocksedge (Bird Attack)

FATIGUE: *Scab:* EP
These boys are family. Local ne'er-do-wells flogging some thick-necked punk. It's hard music—no bullshit. Not boring oi or played-out hardcore, but some sweet spot in between. Thieving licks from the finest UK82 bands, sprinkling in late-'80s NYHC, and just a nod to the boot boys that chased us 'round town when we were nippers. No fucking around, no extra fat. Four songs and you're left picking your teeth off the floor. #YOFC. –Tim Brooks (Warthog Speak, warthogspeak.com)

FAULT LINES: *Janelle:* LP
Indie pop with grungy riffs, melodic bass, and a soft, ethereal synth with an off-kilter tilt of early Modest Mouse and Blonde Redhead. I also wrote down "space guitar" in my notes. I'm pretty sure I shouldn't leave that out. It's perfect imagery for this LP. –Camylle Reynolds (Rockstar)

FNU CLONE INC: *Binary or Die:* LP
Have you ever had someone tell you to "say anything on your mind" and not been able to think of anything to say? FNU Clone Inc. does not have that problem. This album is excellent dialogue that's hard to write. –Billups Allen (Total Punk, floridasdying.com)

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FORBIDDEN DIMENSION: *It's a Morbid, Morbid, Morbid World!:* CD
Calgary's Forbidden Dimension has been doing what it does for a long time, and it has its sound and shtick nailed down tight. Starting back in the late '80s as one ghoul (Jackson Phibes) and his drum machine, Forbidden Dimension has mutated many times over the decades into several forms (usually of the three-piece variety), releasing caskets-full of albums and singles to the zombie hordes. Horror rock is what they do. Think Lovecraftian tales of shambling monsters and alien oppressors but through a much less serious EC Comics type of lens set to some searing '70s rock and punk riffs via a mouldering, cobweb-filled cellar. This is their sixth proper album and I am pleased to report that this bloated corpse still has some quality death rattles to give up. Summon this into your life as soon as possible. –Ty Stranglehold (Self-released)

FREAKS OF NATURE: Self-titled: 7"
If your leather-clad biker gang is going out tonight to do speed and hassle some squares, then Freaks Of Nature might be the band for you. This is punk rock that is heavily influenced by the sounds of the 1960s. Surfy riffs, tambourines, and "ooh-la-las" are sung over verses about love and heartache. The record walks a fine line and falls just short of being a nostalgia act. I imagine this band is a whole lot of fucking fun to see live. –Jon Mule (Slope, sloperecords.com)

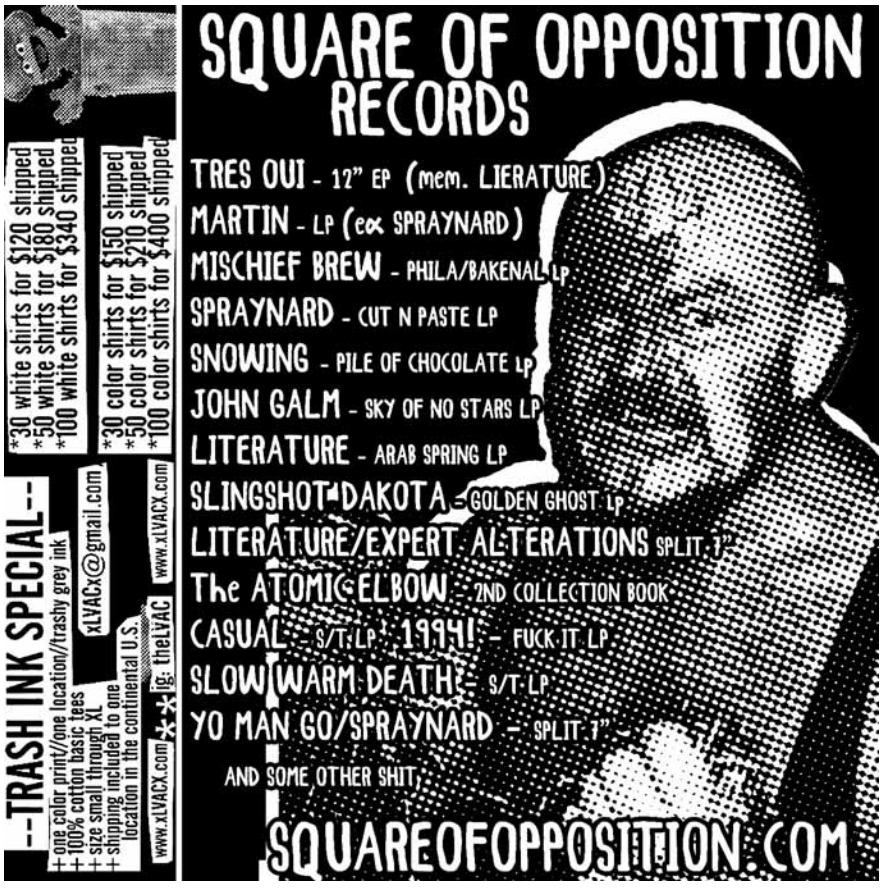
FREE KITTENS & BREAD: *American Miserablist:* CD
Free Kittens & Bread is what happens when a southern boy from Texas grows up with an Offspring education and a modern sensibility. Frontman Chase Spruiell leads a rotating cast of talented musicians in a homegrown rock project that spans Americana, punk, and singer-songwriter styles. Spruiell's lyrics are introspective without being overly self-ruminative, confessional but never whiny. *American Miserablist* opens with a stripped-down twang establishing that it needs no production-as-filler; the drum-driven energy that follows only enhances the storytelling without attempting to replace it. This record is an equally enjoyable listen for punk and southern rock fans alike. –Michelle Kirk (Bad Wolf)

FUCKED UP: *Year of the Snake:* 12"EP
Someone, somewhere is smart enough to make a very detailed graph chart which relates the rate of Fucked Up releases with the length of their songs. With the exception of *Looking for Gold*, which is an outlier in many ways, I predict it would most likely look like a steadily ascending line. And if I were personally forced to plot my preference on said graph, I would find myself residing in the era of aesthetically cohesive hardcore 7"s that were coming out left and right for a couple years. The A side of this 12" is a twenty-three minute track which offers up ambient indie rock paired with Damian's growly hardcore vocals. It's art music for the masses. Not necessarily pushing boundaries, but different enough to hopefully be making people think. The B side is a six-minute instrumental which is written and performed by the drummer, minus the synths. Sorta spacey, sorta driving, it's A plus background music. Aside from everything, this is Tankcrimes' one hundredth release, so congrats to them for making it to this milestone. –Daryl (Tankcrimes)

FUR COATS, THE: *Gumballs in the Meritocracy:* LP/CD
First up, I love listening to Marc Ruvolo's voice as he has a unique vocal sound which fits the quirky pop punk of The Fur Coats so well. Secondly, his lyrics are full of humor and social awareness, a fine combination which the trio underpins with some catchy, flighty tuneage. I'd like to thank The Fur Coats for "I Pretend That I Know What I'm Doing," my new work anthem, which is befitting of toiling away, five days a week with little guidance and piss poor management but still giving the impression that one is on top of things. *Gumballs* takes the quality of the band's first album—*The League of Extraordinary Octopuses*—and kicks on to outdo that debut long player in all aspects. This is a treat which provides buckets of enjoyment in times of Brexit, Trump, and an arthritic knee. –Rich Cocksedge (Johann's Face / Hovercraft)

FUTURE VIRGINS: *Dirty Smiles 7" Anthology:* LP
Despite heaps of lavish praise foisted upon these cats in the pages of this periodical, I must admit I'd never actually heard 'em. Can't think of a better way to get acquainted than via a collection of their singles, like the album in question. Hearing a lot of interesting ideas bouncing about here—shards of power pop, late-'80s Bay Area pop punk, raw '00s indie-punk—served up with conviction and serious effort given to ensuring each song has its own texture. At times I can totally understand how they ended up sharing a split with Toys That Kill, while at others I'm wallowing in the interlocking leads the guitars are laying down. Was a bit put off at first by their scruffiness (yeah, I see the irony in my saying that about a punk band), but the work that was clearly put in here brought me 'round. –Jimmy Alvarado (Let's Pretend)

GAP DREAM: *This Is Gap Dream:* CS
Has Burger Records crossed the Comic Sans font threshold? When something becomes so easy and fashionable to disparage that it comes full circle and is now even more compelling to defend? Has Comic Sans even crossed that threshold yet? Whatever. All I'm trying to say is that I'm a Burger hater but I don't really hate this. It's part Lou Reed-styled confessional psych pop, part retrofuturistic synth work (sometimes in the vein of that one sub-subgenre that's made up of internet guys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remaking the soundtrack to *Drive*), and part shimmering, straightforward indie pop. The latter is my favorite by far; "College Music" and "24 Hour Token" are some seriously catchy songs. Palm mute away. –Indiana Laub (Burger)

GIGANTO: *Latiga Canta:* LP
This album snuck up on me and made itself known with a sucker punch right to the back of my head. I really wasn't prepared for the extreme buffeting this trio was about to lay down but soon came to terms with a rhythm section that was highly combative and mesmeric at the same time. The guitar was the last thing to hit me, as it hammered away, weaving in and out of the rumbling low-end sound. It's not all turbulence—there are quite a few moments of finesse within the eleven tracks—but they only filtered through during many repeated plays. Think of a ballpark named Nomeansno. This is easily the best instrumental music I have heard in some years. –Rich Cocksedge (Bcore Disc)

GINO AND THE GOONS: *Bastard:* 10"
Typically insane release from Tampa garage rock goofs Gino And The Goons, this new 10" is not for the serious. Adorably sleazy, they have the musical acumen to back up the absurdity. They are one of those bands teetering on exiting the underground music scene because they're way too good to not have an exploding fanbase. This 10" is as killer as anything they've done so far in their decade of musical terror. Get on it! –Art Ettinger (Red Lounge, redloungerecords.com)

GIRL POWER:
***Welcome to the Gun Show:* LP**
Loud 'n' fucked up with tempos careening back and forth from mid-tempo to thrash and back. Add a singer who's apparently on the verge of spewing up vocal cords and blood, and you have the sounds of some serious psychosis going on. Dark, heavy, unhinged, great. –Jimmy Alvarado (Kibou, facebook.com/kibourecords)

GOOD FRIEND: *Ride the Storm:* CD
Man, do I love a tinny, snappy snare and this record has it in spades. I don't know much about tuning drums, but however you get that metallic quick whip of a snare beat, it's my favorite. After just a single pass through on this album, I woke up—not one, not two—but three days in a row with "Rock Bottom Revival" stuck in my head. That's one goddamned catchy song. It was very fleeting, but with the itty bit of synth in that track, I was reminded of early aughts pop punk and ska. The rest of the song is a ballad that sharply layers melody. With songs pivoting around lore of things like Hy-Brasil and Fionn, I found myself reading up on Irish mythology. Having seen Giants Causeway where Fionn (also known as Finn MacCool) was said to have battled a giant from Scotland, I felt more endeared to this band. Most of the record is an anthemic ripper, while still including a softer acoustic tune that'd be right at home at any pub. What I'm really taken aback with this band is their vocalist. He's got incredible range and volume while being fiercely vitriolic as well as canorous. Aptly self-aware, they end the record on a tune of love lost called "Irish Goodbyes," which conjures up comparisons to Apologies, I Have None for me. This'll be a record I come back to time and time again. –Kayla Greet (Red Scare)

GRANDLORD HIGHMASTER:
Self-titled: 2 x LP
Three dudes playing sludge metal. Sounds like they went to college, listened to too much Mastodon, and decided to start a band. The album has a lot of polish and technical ability. It also has boring folk instrumentals and a vanilla tone. Sonically, I couldn't distinguish this from another record of a similar vintage just by sound. It's a pretty bland record to come stocked on a 180 gram gatefold double LP. I don't blame the band; if I had made this I would be proud of it too. The music is proficient, but I'm left feeling cold at the end of the day. –Bryan Static (Kill All Music, killallmusic.storeenvy.com)

HAMMER AND THE NAILS:
***Badge of Dishonor:* 7"**
Hammer And The Nails are from Boston and share members with the (deservedly) hyped Battle Ruins. HATN have similar influences, but these guys diversify a little bit. There is still a heavy '90s Japanese oi influence, but the structures are more complex and cull from mod rock. They use wah on the guitars and don't really "do" anthems. They're probably the least accessible, least poppy modern skinhead band and that's definitely their strength. The title track on this record is good, but the flip side tracks, "The More It Gets Better" and "Shape of the Things to Come" show their range, the former being a moody traverse through their influences, featuring an angular breakdown and those sparse gang vocals thrown at the very end. The latter is an interpretation of the old garage rock tune that offers some interesting twists on the original. –Ian Wise (Rock n Roll Disgrace)

HEAVY HEART: *Distance:* CD
Gruff, melodic pop punk from France. Reminds me a good deal of Banner Pilot or None More Black. The main aspect of this record that impresses me is the power behind the singer's voice. The production is clean, but works to bring the harsh, melodic vocals to the forefront. There are some familiar tropes and clichés on this record, but overall it's a very worthy debut. I would prefer if the production was just a bit dirtier. Recommended if you miss mid-'00s Fat Wreck. –Bryan Static (Brassneck)

HELLMOUTH: *Oblivion:* CD
Cover looks like some Satan-friendly metal band. The music itself is more along the lines of modern East Coast-influenced "hardcore"—perpetual throat shredding and pervasive covert

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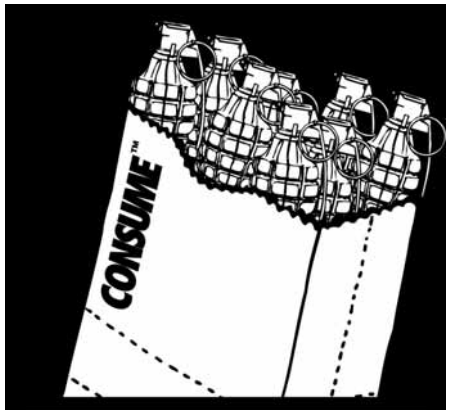

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metal influences slathered over varying tempos. Not my cup o' champurrado, but they do it well. –Jimmy Alvarado (Fast Break)

HEZ: Self-titled: 12"
Heavy and destructive noisy hardcore from Panama. This record moves along at a slightly-faster-than-mid-paced romp through all eight tracks and lemme' tell ya', each and every one is a total stomper. Reverberated and delayed vocals meander through the mix and the awkward "lead" breaks are just oscillating noise (from the guitar? I can't really tell). The bass really holds the whole thing down, providing a lot of the melodic backbone to the songs while the guitar is pushed to the side of the mix. I imagine that the drummer is some sort of giant orc pounding the bones of an enemy soldier on a kit made of animal skin. Sonic references include modern Spanish punk like Glam/Una Bestia Incontrolable. This is supposedly pretty limited but readily available in the U.S. –Ian Wise (World Gone Mad)

HOLLYWOODFUN DOWNSTAIRS: *Tetris:* CD
Figured by the album-title-themed cover this might be some sorta wavy punky stuff. What it is, though, is assaultive noise rock—unrelenting, pummeling, and remarkably well executed with coherent structuring. Reminiscent of when the dentist is giving that Novocain shot, accidentally gets too close to a nerve, and your jaw gets those unpleasant wiggly feelings, all while someone keeps opening and shutting a blast furnace nearby. –Jimmy Alvarado (Antena Krzyku, sklep@antenak zyku.pl, antenakrzyku.pl)

HUMMINGBIRD OF DEATH / BEARTRAP: Split: 5"
If brevity is the soul of wit, then this split 5" is powerviolence par excellence, for the mini record includes less than two minutes of music. So, I thought it fitting to write a hardcore haiku: Blood flows from my ears / Anguish, darkness, blinding rage / Blink and it's over. –Sean Arenas (Riotous Outburst / Here And Now / To Live A Lie / Give Praise)

HUNG UPS: *Panic Attack:* CS
Solid demo from this Salt Lake City pop punk band. Catchy tunes, classic single-note leads, and enough speed and grit to still deserve the "punk" half of the pop punk tag. If Ramonescore is your thing, this is worth checking out. –Chad Williams (Pizza Girl)

IDAHO GREEN: *Fuck Yegen, Here's Idaho Green:* CS
Fuzzy, janky, bouncy power pop punk rock with a lot of heart, goddammit. Maybe it's the clearly DIY production or the way the ever-so-slightly affected vocals and tastefully dorky horn parts telegraph that nothing here gets taken too seriously—something about this band just makes them seem like lovable underdogs. I want to write about them like they're a Little League team. Like, go get 'em, champs! Show them what you got! Really genuinely fun. I wish this EP ended with a real fourth song rather than a camp singalong version of "My Humps," but I guess that's what I get for talking about fun. –Indiana Laub (No Direction)

J.D. BUHL: *Little Victories 1978-85:* LP
Collection of recordings from various Berkeley-area bands—The Saviors, The Jars, The J.D. Buhl Group, and The Believers—with Mr. Buhl as the connection between them. The twelve tracks from the different bands, some of which previously unreleased, are assembled into a cohesive whole that showcases a through-line that dances over blurred borders between, punk, power pop, and straight pop with echoes of the prime bits of '50s through the early '80s rock'n' roll. Gems abound here. –Jimmy Alvarado (Almost Ready)

JEWELED SNAKES: Self-titled: LP
Jeweled Snakes make a sexy, alien kind of electronic music that might reasonably be characterized by suffixes like "-step" or "-beat." It reminds me at first of Slava Tsukerman's electro-baroque soundtrack to the cult-famous movie *Liquid Sky*. But instead of fugue structured instrumentals, distorted vocals coax the listener deeper into the strange, spacey soundscapes of this LP. The moods range from urgent to inviting, but the whole record carries sounds from a haunted future on a planet we have not quite yet apprehended. It's a good record. –Lyle (Resipiscent, resipiscent.com)

JIGSAW SEEN, THE: *For the Discriminating Completist:* CD
The Jigsaw Seen has never crossed my radar until now, despite being active since 1988. This disc of alternate versions of their stuff is a great introduction: sun-soaked and painstakingly crafted shimmering gems that evoke British Invasion pop and XTC (especially vocally in the case of the latter). Right up the alley of any and all Guided By Voices fans out there. –Michael T. Fournier (Burger)

KEG KILLERS: Self-titled: CD
Victoria, British Columbia's Keg Killers have been a local scene mainstay since around 2000. In a small city where a lot of bands kneel at the scummy altar of local legends Dayglo Abortions, Keg Killers stand out. Don't get me wrong, these songs are chock full of tales of horror and debauchery; it's just that rather than setting them to hardcore or crossover thrash, Keg Killers dwell in the land of New York Dolls, Teenage Head, or Forgotten Rebels. Punk rock'n'roll at its finest. Hopefully we don't have to wait another decade or so for the next release! –Ty Stranglehold (Self-released)

KITCHEN PEOPLE: *Trendoid:* LP
Australians have been making superb lo-fi and garage rock for the last couple of years, and Kitchen People appear to be carrying that torch, but with

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synthesizers. Weirdly, these influences make *Trendoid* sound like a slightly more abrasive version of Blur: it's a full, tight sound with big, beachy guitars and distorted vocals and just enough synth. Sounds like a wilder, futuristic UV Race. I love this shit. Don't miss this record. –Lyle (Oops Baby, oopsbabyrecords.com)

KOMPLIKATIONS: *Humans:* 12"
Sneering and discordant goth punk from "the borderlands of Germany, France and Belgium." Komplikations are a vocals/synth/drums trio, and their music is as intense, ugly, and compelling as blood drying on black leather. –Chris Terry (Rockstar)

LA PÊCHE: *Bright and Bending:* 12" EP
A pretty all-star lineup takes up some good elements on this quick little EP. Singer/songwriter Krista Holly is joined by husband Dave Diem of Twelve Hour Turn, Jeff Gensterblum of Small Brown Bike, Drew DeMaio of Strikeforce Diablo, and vocalist Keio Ichinose to make five impressive tracks which whet the pallet for more, just like a good EP should do. The songwriting incorporates some good folk elements, especially the layered and harmonized vocals. Combined with lilting shoegaze-inspired production and some alt-country leads, Holly's earnest and haunting vocals bring this to a place that's almost like The Good Life, with moments of surreal beauty that is tinged with something harrowing. It's a great guided trip through the discomfort of facing changing seasons and is a testament to what can be done with careful, potent songwriting that doesn't need to be sparse to be direct. –Theresa W. (Bakery Outlet)

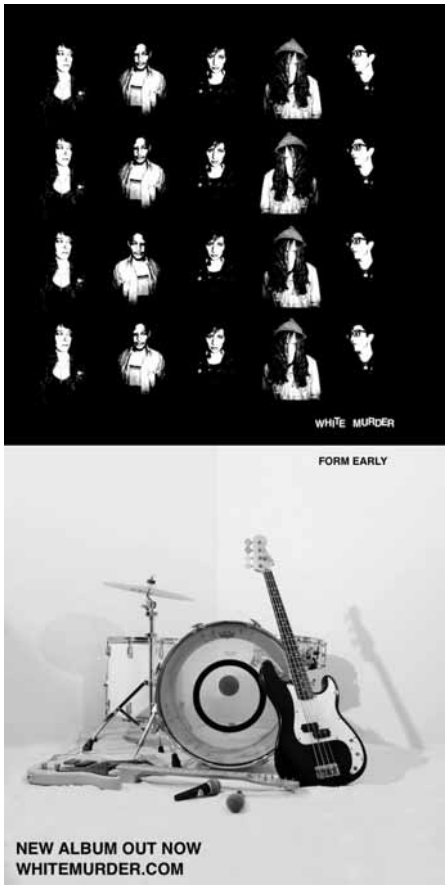
LÊ ALMEIDA: *Todas As Brisas:* LP
A concoction of '90s indie, lo-fi, and psychedelia from Brazil. Mellow, trippy, and oddly minimal, they keep things reined in with tasty pop hooks that would make Davila 666 envious. I'm sure a head full of assorted substances would open this up in unimaginable ways, but lacking time to prepare a satisfying trip, one can still find much here to keep the earholes blissfully twisted. –Jimmy Alvarado (IFB, ifbrecords.com)

LYSOL:
"Wired" b/w "Knucklehead": 7"
When I first heard of Seattle's Lysol I wrongly assumed they were influenced by the Melvins (who have an album entitled *Lysol*). I also wrongly assumed this about a band called Ozma, who turned out to be indie-rock garbage. Thankfully, such was not the case with Lysol. On "Wired," the band launches full throttle into mid '90s Recess Records punk a la F.Y.P or Quincy Punx. "Knucklehead" continues with the same fervor but with a looser garage punk feel, much like all the bands you know and love on Rip Off. It's a Total Punk release, so it's short, sweet, and to the point. –Juan Espinosa (Total Punk, totalpunkrecords.bandcamp.com)

MARRIAGE MATERIAL: Demo: CS
I'm writing this review on the anniversary of the death of Kurt Cobain: one of this century's most missed and renowned rock'n'roll figures who needs no introduction. Fast forward some twenty-plus years: punk has never been more relevant and while the mighty KC assured us that it was dead and gone, we can now only say that about him for sure. Marriage Material have unwittingly perfected the grunge rock formula with ease that only comes from years of involvement in their previous and current endeavors (Spokenest, Summer Vacation, Ah Fuck, Pinned In Place, Golden Beat studios, et cetera.) A saucy experiment of Sleater-Kinney and Pavement soaked in *Bleach* gone terribly right. Alas, grunge effectively ate itself and subsequently became a retro clothing style which was mostly due to disillusionment and greed. Marriage Material stand to gain nothing from playing this sort of noise except to make some stereo speakers rattle and some bodies sway to the beat. "Got no reason to get up. Got no reason to stay asleep." Fuck, man. Same. –Juan Espinosa (Self-released, marriagematerial.bandcamp.com)

MEN WITH CHIPS: *Attention Spent:* LP
A good platter of post-punk from Australia. Not exactly reinventing the wheel here, but they craft their wheel well while making it their own. Offers include panic-inducing post-punk à la the Fall, noisy jazz interludes, occasional cacophony, and delightful noisy *Pink Flag*-era Wire jammers. Kinda reminds me of Pavement in the way that they borrow from their predecessors. Weird yet grounded. A nice surprise, for sure. –Vincent (Homeless)

MIDDLE CHILDREN: *Earth Angel:* LP
Within the first minute of "Baby Boom," the wistful male-female vocals jubilantly erupt into a percussive, upbeat jaunt; winning me over. Then I read the insert and discovered that Patrick Jennings (Hot New Mexicans, Purple 7) and Ginger Alford (Good Luck, High Dive, One Reason) comprise the heart and soul of Middle Children. That's when my hair blew back. Both Jennings and Alford, who plays drums, are low-key songwriting legends, and it's totally acceptable to have any one of their bands be your favorite band. Middle Children is no exception. Although more understated and country-tinged than Purple 7 and Good Luck, songs like "True" and "No Shock There" linger, their hooks slowly sinking in and taking hold. On "Shit," Jennings plaintively sings, "You're not washed up my friend / I don't think you're wrong always," nearly verging on Mount Eerie and Wilco levels of devastation. "Sister," with its downpicked guitar and harmonizing lead, presents a more driving but equally introspective Middle Children: "I want to remember that my sister is still here and okay." But the pièce de résistance is closer "Woods," which boasts Matt



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Tobey's (Good Luck) additional guitar wizardry and a high-spirited chorus that swells until the song abruptly ends. I'm glad I knew nothing about this record before I dropped the needle because I haven't been this pleasantly surprised in a long time. –Sean Arenas (Let's Pretend, letspretendrecords.com)

MIDNITE SNAXXX: *Chew on This!:* LP
Midnite Snaxxx continues to be the warm T-shirt you can put on since the day of The Bobbyteens seems to have passed. *Chew on This* contains thirteen well-crafted, snotty blasts of three-chord rock utilizing proper Ramones pop sensibilities. Theirs is a car that careens out of control on the three-chord highway. "All Fall Down" is a good example of the bass-punching melodies through overdriven pop riffs. But the more root rock-inspired riffs kick ass as well. The subject matter is the usual rumination on teenage angst that you are either currently experiencing or looking back on, ranging from "I've Been a Jerk" to "Quit Being a Dick." "They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old."–Billups Allen (Pelican Pow Wow)

MOB 47: *Carnival in Rio:* Flexi
Easily one of the greatest hardcore bands this godforsaken planet has ever produced, Sweden's Mob 47 have turned an obvious Discharge influence into a sound all their own and, in turn, have influenced generation after generation of thrashers in backyards, basements, favelas, and barrios in every corner of punk's underground for more than thirty years. Collected here are several unreleased tracks from one of their earliest incarnations dating back to the 1980s, and one dating from the first weekend of their most recent reformation in the '00s. The tunes are, as ever, frantic and furious, over long before you realize it, and you're ultimately left wanting more, as it should be. Saw 'em—I shit you not—at an East L.A. yard party a couple of years ago. They're as formidable as ever and this is worthy of much praise. –Jimmy Alvarado (Insane Society)

MONOLORD: *Vaenir:* LP
Absolutely every fan of Sleep or Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats needs to add this record to their collection. It provides all the heaviness your doomful heart desires, interlaced with warbly psychedelia to keep it interesting. Monolord is a highly underrecognized stoner metal band from Gothenburg, Sweden, formed in 2013. *Vaenir*, their sophomore album, exists as one cohesive unit, although the standout track is "Died a Million Times"—I once listened to it on a plane while taking off (optimistic, right?). The track features a breakdown in which an electronic guitar appears to be talking back and forth to another, or perhaps echoing itself, punctuated by a face-melting drop. This whole album is a gift to the sludge world, so go ahead and treat yourself. –Michelle Kirk (RidingEasy, info@easyriderrecords.com, ridingeasyrecs.com)

MORAL PANIC: Self-titled: LP
High octane punk rock in spades here—a little bit of early Midwest punk/hardcore, a bit of early beach punk, and a shitload of attitude. From start to finish they just hammer away at tune after tune, each with swagger to spare. Guaranteed to make you wanna trash the joint when you ain't giving into shakin' yer rump. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

MUST, THE: *Wormhole:* CS
I guess we can call this gloomy surf punk, or maybe a rough take on what The Cramps or TSOL did. It's in that realm. When they keep things brief and wild, as on "Left to Waste," they're truly on to something. The more conventional '80s ghoul punk moments can drag. It's difficult to gauge a Halloween band during Easter, you know? Check back on this one when the leaves change. –Matt Werts (Richter Scale)

NAARC: *Loam:* 2 x CS
Pretty sharp darkwave, like The Faint with grittier vocals. It's the kind of niche sound that isn't inherently listenable but that's almost certainly the point. Most of the industrial elements come together well with the screamo overlays, though sometimes it could use a lighter touch. The two thirteen-plus minute experimental tracks at the end are probably the reason for the packaging, which is the first double cassette I've ever seen. That alone is pretty cool and would probably spawn more conversation for me than the tunes. –Theresa W. (Self-released)

NEAUX: *Fell off the Deep End:* LP
Former moshy hardcore dudes met the singer of some pop rock band at Warped Tour and joined up to do the shoegaze thing. (That sentence came out sounding like a burn, but that's literally what it says in their bio.) The music sounds like what it sounds like when that happens. A couple of the more driving songs like "Somewhere Up North" go for that fuzzy alt-rock sound that a lot of pop punk bands grew into in the last few years. The cover art really tells you all you need to know about how this record sounds: swirling florals riddled with halftone dots, minimalist track listing in a vast expanse of negative space—these bands have gotten the aesthetic down to a science. This is the logical progression for kids who graduated from old Title Fight to new Title Fight and are trying to decide what to stream on Spotify next. –Indiana Laub (Iron Pier)

NIP DRIVERS: *Fox on the Run:* 7"
The Nip Drivers were one of those early '80s L.A. punk bands that managed to disarm any hostility caused by an offensive name—and often even more offensive lyrical content—with smart, slyly poppy hardcore that straddled a line drawn between Redd Kross and, say, Bad Religion. The two comp rarities here—a cover of Sweet's "Fox on the Run" from the *Desperate Teenage*

Lovedolls soundtrack and "E.Y.O.B.," from the *When Men Were Men…And Sheep Were Scared* comp (though technically the latter also counts as a track from their second, and final, album, *Oh Blessed Freak Show*)—are a nice, brief showcase of the band channeling both sides, making a glam classic their own personal punk classic and turning a chorus of "eat yourself out baby" into something of an anthem of its own. Once existed a time when punk reveled in its own irreverent obnoxiousness, when folks knew the diff between being a nazi prick and working overtime at pissing people off for the sheer entertainment value. This band is of that time, and this "new" single is the band at likely their most accessible. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slope)

NO HEART: *Scum:* 7"
I must admit that I have been pretty burned out on oi/street punk in the last few years. There was a point where I was reviewing a lot of oi records and it was all blending together. I'm not sure if I am fully over that, but I did enjoy this two-song blast from Victoria's own No Heart. I heard that these recordings were only meant to be demos, but in this case, it really works in their favor as I get a cool, Templars kind of lo-fi feel from it. Having seen them live recently, I can say I am looking forward to hearing some new recordings from these guys. –Ty Stranglehold (Longshot)

NOISE: *Demo Tapes 1991-1995:* LP
Noise is one of those super underground nerd tape trader golden gods. From some tucked away spot in Brazil they put out these hyper obscure demos of absolute face melting grind. Anti-cop, anti-capitalist, anti-state – these demos have been dubbed across the globe finally appear on vinyl. The packaging is neat, with lyrics and scans of the original cassettes. The "music" is just a literal wall of noise. This means absolutely zero to me, but fans of Lotus Fucker, Rupture, and the like may want a look. –Tim Brooks (SPHC)

NOSEBLEED: *Lowlife:* 7" EP
Four tracks of blown-out, pissed-off thrash. There's maybe just a hint of Discharge buried in the bleak caterwauling, but nothing so overt that this falls into hero worship. Some nice work here. –Jimmy Alvarado (Vinyl Conflict)

OLVIDO: Demo: CS
Things are still gelling for this Mexico City band, but they're off to a good start, playing simple punk with melodic leads and a sorta snotty woman singer. I hope they stick around, because I'm excited to hear what's next. –Chris Terry (Richter Scale)

OPEN CITY: Self-titled: LP/CD
With band members who have served time in the likes of Kid Dynamite, Worriers, Ceremony, and Ted Leo And The Pharmacists, the expectations for Open City's debut album were high. The outcome does the band justice as it tears through a bunch of songs that have me thinking of a mix of Fugazi, War On Women, and Dag Nasty. When the band is raging full-on, vocalist Rachel Rubino sounds as if she is channelling a rabid grizzly bear, such is the effort she puts in to venting her wrath and frustrations. There are calmer moments and these find Rubino shifting to a more subtle delivery, helping highlight a band not as musically confined as I first thought. This is a quality album. –Rich Cocksedge (End Hits)

PAT TODD & THE RANKOUTSIDERS: *The Outskirts of Your Heart:* LP
This is the tenth anniversary re-release of a great album packed full of barn-burning American rock'n'roll songs reminiscent of the Mekons or the Blasters. Pat Todd has already been around the block a few times with the Lazy Cowgirls and this band, the Rankoutsiders, but these songs are timeless. This album, for me, is the pick of this review cycle because of full-on ragers like "Bad Memories, Poison, & Regret" and sweet acoustic songs like "Your Heart, Your Soul & Your Ass." –Jon Mule (Hound Gawd!, houndgawd.com)

PEACOCKS, THE: *Flamingo:* CD
A Swiss rockabilly band? Now I've heard *everything.* Actually, The Peacocks have been around for over twenty-five years and put out a couple albums on Asian Man. So, evidently I'm real far behind the curve on this one. But I'm happy to report that The Peacocks are actually pretty damn good. I can imagine them being an energetic and fun live act. I'm sure they get this often, but the band I hear the most similarity to is Reverend Horton Heat. If you're into rockabilly, you've probably heard of this trio, but if not, definitely give them a spin. –Kurt Morris (Concrete Jungle)

PERKELE: *Best from the Past:* CD
Twenty bouncy street punk anthems from this long-running, left-wing Swedish band. This is more fun than tough, with plenty of singalong choruses. I can't find much English-language info about this album, but think it might be some sort of retrospective. New or old, I rate it pogo-approved. –Chris Terry (Spirit Of The Streets)

PERSONALITY CRISIS: Self-titled: 2 x CD
When you ask someone to name legendary Canadian punk rock bands, you will almost invariably receive answers of DOA, Teenage Head, Nomeansno, SNFU, et cetera. Those answers are surely not wrong by any stretch, but if you come across anyone even slightly in the know, the name Personality Crisis will come up. PC were Winnipeg's champions of punk rock. Incredibly heavy and original, they straddled that sweet spot in the early '80s where rock'n'roll, punk rock, and hardcore all came together. They were destined for greatness, but

instead tumbled into obscurity, with their one near-perfect album, 1983's C*reatures for Awhile* disappearing for many years (bootlegs and one reissue notwithstanding) until now. Sounds Escaping has dug deep and struck gold! The first disc has the album in its entirety and two compilation tracks. This would be amazing enough, but then there is disc number two: fifteen tracks worth of studio demos from 1981-'82, much of which has never seen the light of day before. Everything is remastered and sounds better than ever. If you know the band, you've probably already have this or have ordered it. If you haven't, you should check it out. I can honestly say I have never heard a band that sounds like Personality Crisis. –Ty Stranglehold (Sounds Escaping, soundsescaping.com)

PHONE JERKS:
***Can't Stand the Maritimes:* 7"**
Here's an old fashioned one-sider with three songs on one side. These would pop up occasionally, but it was a trademark of Rip Off Records' singles in the '90s. I always wondered how much money was saved leaving one side of a single blank. Either way, I appreciated the brevity. If you're into Rip Off-style singles, this is a must-have. Three blasters of overdriven guitar moving at Teengenerate speed. All the songs are great. Density prevails. One to look out for if you're into punk'n'roll. –Billups Allen (Goodbye Boozy, goodbyeboozy.blogspot.com)

PISS TEST: *LP II:* LP
I can't remember the first time I heard Portland Oregon's Piss Test, but I have been a fan for a few years now. I snapped up everything they had available on vinyl the first time I saw them play, and it is a great day when a new one comes out. Here we have their second LP and they continue to crank out the kind of punk rock that fuels my life. Agitated, frantic, and off kilter, the songs run the risk of spinning out of control if it wasn't for the dialled-in rhythm section becoming the anchor to pull them back in just in the nick of time. Songs touch on issues such as gentrification, sexism at shows, asshole cops, and strip bar employees among other things. Even if I didn't already love the band, they would have landed me with the opening line from "Basement": "I still hate Fleetwood Mac." I do indeed. –Ty Stranglehold (Dirt Cult)

PISSE: *Kohlrübenwinter:* 7"
German weirdo lo-fi synth-punk. The first three songs cruise along nicely to the tune of the Coneheads worshipping Kraut rock and the Screamers instead of Devo. The fourth and final song is not as easily digestible, as it sounds like a bubble gum ballad with a misplaced theremin and strange Tiny Tim-esque high pitched vocals. Three out of four ain't bad at all, so I'm curious to see where, if anywhere, they go from here. A word of advice: your band's name should probably be in a bigger font than the title of your EP if you really want people to give your band a listen. –Juan Espinosa (Harbinger Sound / In A Car)

PLURAL BEING: Demo: CS
Sometimes you stare into the bathroom mirror and contemplate the endless void that stares back at you. Sometimes you continue to scrutinize that void, pondering how humans continue to fill an unending hole with death, hate, and war with Sisyphean verve. Sometimes you know enough people in your small town that you go into the basement and translate that contemplation into sound and capture it on cassette. To be fair, this cassette has hit me on all the right levels after two weeks filled with international terrorist and American missile attacks. Plural Being makes ugly music for ugly times and we need that. Professional blue cassette with hard stock fold-out cover and lyrics. Members of Panzram and Merkit. –Matt Seward (IFB, ifbrecords.com)

POSERS: *Posers, Too:* 7" EP
Punk with standard pop/rock conventions thrown in. They've clearly mastered their instruments and know how to craft a song, but ultimately sound primed for Warped's big stage, which ain't exactly a good thing. –Jimmy Alvarado (Enthrall, enthrallrecords.com)

PROTESTSTORM:
***Tides Malande Tänder:* 7" EP**
Manic, furious thrash in the classic Swedish mold. Ten songs in less than ten minutes, and with a cat from Krigshot in the lineup, you know shit gets wild and frantic right quick—and is probably not gonna do good things to your brain if you just shotgunned three triple espressos. –Jimmy Alvarado (Insane Society)

PROTEX: *Tightrope:* CD
For those not acquainted with 'em, Protex were one of the first-wave punk bands outta Northern Ireland. Like contemporaries Rudi, The Undertones, and so on, theirs was a sound heavy with power pop and garage rock influences, with maybe a bit more of the latter manifesting in Protex's sound. Thirty-nine years down the road and this sounds like it could've come out right after their debut single, "Don't Ring Me Up"—maybe a smidge less raw in production, but the same laid-back vocal delivery, garage structures, and pop sensibilities are in full display. Fans of their old stuff and newer converts with more fluid preconceptions of "punk" will find much to their liking here. –Jimmy Alvarado (Bachelor)

PUBLIC TRUST: *The Leper:* 7"
Can I go ahead and call record of the year? I know it's classless to say something like that (how many times has that dumb joke been made in these pages?) but I don't think I've ever been so charmed right off my feet by a new record like this since I was a teenager, and listening to this strange, irreverent record brought me back to the school

days of discovering the likes of the Pagans, Kraut, and the Controllers via weird comps and the University of Alabama's punk radio show, *The Faster and Louder*. Public Trust are a Boston-based (studio?) band featuring members of some hardcore bands that probably aren't hip to like anymore, but these guys play pitch-perfect first wave American punk. The guitars sound like chainsaws cutting through wood that's maybe a little too dense for the motor while the drums are stripped down, rock influenced and not "1-2" punches. The vocals are vomited up somewhere from the bottom of the singer's throat. Lyrics discuss cigarette smoke, being a leper, and rolling your eyes at neo-nazis. This is all about "this is how my fucked-up mind works" and not "what can I do to appease the punks?" For us anti-social freaks who grew up listening to *Killed By Death* and watching horror movies on VHS, this will always be what punk is. –Ian Wise (Boston Strangler, funwithsmackrecords.bigcartel.com)

PURE HELL: *Noise Addiction:* LP
For those that are unaware, Pure Hell were a Philadelphia band that dropped a serious slab of wax in 1978 called *No Rules* before relocating to New York and recording a full length later the same year that was shelved. The story isn't quite clear, but afterwards they just drifted off into obscurity save for the clammy-handed crowd digging through record bins for obscure punk scorchers of the golden era. The shelved album surfaced for the first time in 2006 on a CD and very limited vinyl pressing on Welfare Records, a label with a touch-and-go catalog that doesn't really market their releases. It went out of print and the band was once again forced back into the collector's circuit. This Spanish pressing of the album got a great mastering job and features better art than the 2006 pressing. Musically, it's not quite as unhinged as the *No Rules* single but it's still energetic and fresh. The main surprise here is the heavy use of lead guitar and lots of effects. The guitars weren't typical of punk at the time, but you can tell they were looking heavily towards Ron Asheton (and supposedly Jimi Hendrix) for inspiration, and it works. The songs are all unique and they are almost all really great songs (there is one dud, thrown at the end of Side A) that would please any fan of the New York Dolls, Stooges, or the Voidoids. It's disheartening to hear this in 2017 and realize if this had gotten a proper release in 1978 this band would have been referenced in every VH1 special and Sony Pictures documentary about the history of punk and they would have all been living happily off their royalty checks instead of being relegated to boutique pressings of their record. –Ian Wise (Beat Generation)

QUICK, THE: *Untold Rock Stories:* CS
These guys are a record store dude's wet dream: exploited by Kim Fowley in the '70s, feathered hair, paved the way for L.A. punk, broke up and watched their peers get famous, a couple of their songs wound up as highlights on obscure power pop comps, and one of their ex-members went on to make the theme song to *Friends*. This super-catchy twenty-two song odds and ends comp features everything but this L.A. power pop band's 1976 LP, and when "Hillary" came on, I said, "Holy fuck, this is good" out loud to my empty dining room. –Chris Terry (Burger)

RAD / CROISSANTS: Split: 7"
RAD is, well, rad. One of the best hardcore bands in Sacramento and one of the hardest bands to find on Google. Just try it. They squeeze in eleven songs in the time it takes me to run to the fridge for a beer and back. Songs like "Twins 2: The Movie (the Soundtrack)," "The Crow Soundtrack," and "Comic Con" are nerdy as shit, granted, but it's the sickest, toughest mix of Jerry's Kids and D.R.I. '80s hardcore with Lory's vocals at the forefront. It's fitting that they cover Jerry's Kids "I Don't Belong" for all the above reasons. Croissants, spelled "Xants" on the cover, offer up a completely different sound on the flip. Three stoner punk songs "Attraction to the Mainstream," "Don't Play Cool," and "Everyone's a Rocker" are delicious downers on the doldrums of cool. –Camylle Reynolds (SAC)

RESONARS, THE: *The Complete Resonars:* 7 x CS
I'll start by saying that somewhere out there is a person who can truly parse this complete Resonars discography (seven LPs, a handful of EPs, compilation tracks, outtakes), who can chart the growth from *Bright and Dark* to *Crummy Desert Sound*, who can speak to the reasons why the stunning and raw *The Resonars On Tour!* record was eventually scrapped. Someone can find the obscure references encoded in Matt Rendon and Co.'s sound beyond the obvious Beatles jangle and the general history of post-'60s psychedelia and power pop. Someone knows all the words. I'm not that person, but I *will* say that The Resonars are pure and true and real. They're a big, blooming heart. That they made '60s garage pop records in the late '90s, well before there was a Burger Records scene/infrastructure to support them, is evidence enough that they're legit. That they've been so consistently and evenly *good*, for years, up to and including their latest releases on Burger, without ever straying from the script, is the real revelation. There are bands who use genre as a jumping off point, who draw from the past and then seem to go beyond genre into their own singular identity. The Resonars commit in the strictest way to genre convention, and it frees them somehow, or perhaps: what's satisfying is both the particulars of the individual song and the larger devotion to doing one thing the right way, every time. This isn't remarkable in itself: crime fiction, westerns, bossa nova, soul 45s can all be pleasurable without being visionary. But it's nice to be reminded. The adherence to rules can be gratifying, comforting. The

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simplicity can be the thrill. –Matt Werts (Burger, burgerrecords.com, Lolipop, lolipoprecords.com)

RETRASERES: *Grandes Éxitos Vol. III:* LP
Jorge Parras' batshit cover art immediately grabbed my attention: a visual orgy of violence, debauchery, and defecation as if illustrated by a demonically possessed Sergio Aragonés. Across fourteen songs, Retraseres channels the spitting snarl of Wau Y Los Arrrghs!!! and the fuck-all attitude of The Mummies. What they lack in originality, they make up for in sheer exuberance because there isn't a dull moment on this LP. They want to make it clear that "boring" is not in their lexicon (and neither is "slow," "subtle," or "restrained"). As a three-piece, the bass often sits up front—especially on "Ebola," "Samuruc," and "China y Japón"—making the music raucous and manic, sparking a compulsive fit of head-bobbing. Trust me, although certain to induce a creaky neck, Retraseres is worth it. –Sean Arenas (Hover Craft)

RIK AND THE PIGS: *"Don't Tell on Me" b/w "Gimme Mick":* 7"
It's been a while since I checked in on Rik And The Pigs. The only record I had of theirs before buying this here platter is their first 7" on Total Punk. Something changed in Pig-land since then. They've gone from having an off-kilter Lumpy Records feel to a more rocking, glam-ish stomp. It works for the Pigs, especially live. Rik's jaundiced humor and world view are still present, but the Pigs' musicianship has improved. "Gimme Mick" is my fave of the two offered here, with a half-assed (in the best way) *Some Girls*-era Stones shuffle, paying homage to and taking the piss out of everyone's second favorite rock'n'roll chicken walker (your first favorite is Hasil Adkins, in case you forgot). –Sal Lucci (Total Punk, floridasdying.com)

RUBY: Self-titled: 7" EP
This sounded so much like another Marked Men side band I had to scramble for more info, and no, these cats appear to hail from Germany. Dark, minor chord punk with pop flourishes in all the right places. Guess the "Denton Sound" is now being Xeroxed globally, which will ultimately kill its charm. Thankfully we're still early enough in the game that there's still some quality left in the template, as is evidenced here. –Jimmy Alvarado (Rock Star)

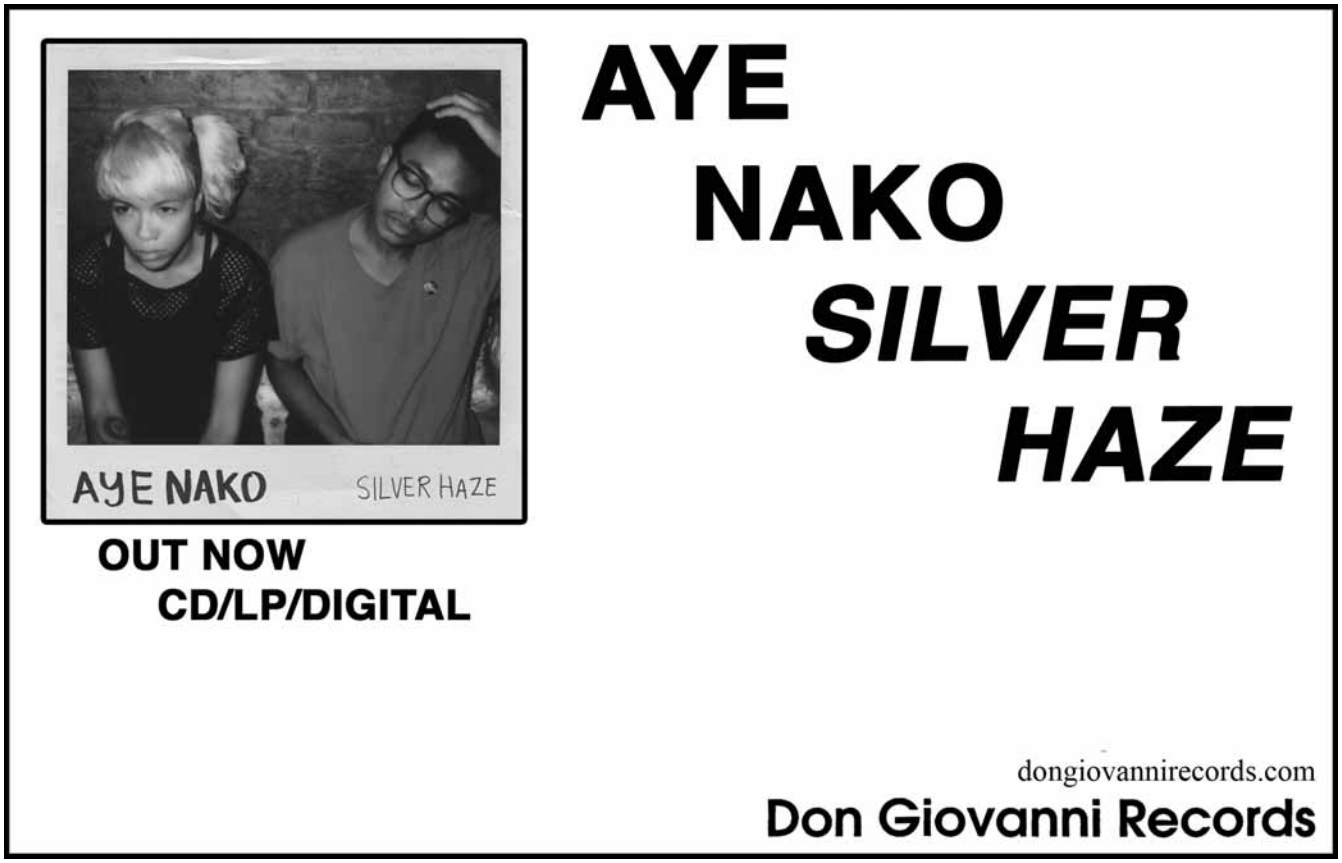
S.L.I.P.: *Slippy When Wet:* LP
The foundation is well-played hardcore with enough creativity in the chord changes and song structures that make this above the pack. Their singer sells the whole package, though, with vocals that evince echoes of both early Jack Brewer—and John Stabb at his most sarcastically obnoxious—and add a bit of a lighter tone to the proceedings. This could've easily gone south at any point, but they pull it off and maintain the quality over a full-length. –Jimmy Alvarado (Sorry State)

SEB AND THE RHAA DICKS: *Pop Apocalyptique:* CD
My typical routine for reviewing records includes one listen with no research while I dig into an album's liner notes, inserts, and artwork. On first spin I truly thought this record was a split with two bands from France. Well, I got one part of that right. This actually is a one man band whose musical stylings are all over the map. Seb plays guitar sitting down while playing a keyboard with one foot and a drum with the other. He sings in English and French. He kicks out raucous and raw punk songs then flips right into mellow acoustic jams. Had I not turned to the internet for more information about him, I'd have sworn there were several other people involved in making this record. There's just so much going on in these eighteen tracks. Obviously, there are some songs that he plays a full drum kit instead of just a kick pedal on a bass drum or cymbal, but I'm certain he's a marvel to see live. Dude even does his own backing vocals. I have a natural urge to compare him to Atom And His Package, especially with the keyboard work, but he's so much more than having a sequencer and a guitar. "Un Peu de Cold" is one of my favorite tracks as it's incredibly dancey and catchy. Though I'm curious about his fixation on Red Hot Chili Peppers—as he both samples "Suck My Kiss" and has a song titled "Anthony Kiedis"—this record is like a kid's birthday party and sweaty basement show all in one. If you like to get weird, get this. –Kayla Greet (Gabu, Joe Cool, Rock'n'Roll Masturbation)

SEX CRIME: Self-titled: 7"
Synthy punky Pacific Northwest goodness. Like the Screamers raised a pack of riot grrrls on a steady diet of Los Crudos, The Dickies, and tall cans of Red Bull. Very fucking good. –Candace Hansen (Jonny Cat)

SHAMEOVER: Demo: CS
This is exactly what a demo cassette should be; a good representation of a band finding their footing and getting down a lo-fi version of what they sound like right now. The sound of Shameover is a bit of pop punk with some clean guitar twee pop for good measure. Songs are fairly strong and I could see how this band could really be onto something with a little more time together to really gel. It may be a bit of a lazy comparison, but I do not think it would be out of line to call this something like a punkier Cub. Both bands are from Vancouver—so maybe that is part of it—but the same kind of charm is in place, which is high praise coming from me. Fans of the early This Is My Fist stuff would probably find a whole lot to like here as well. –Mike Frame (Pet Dino)

SIGH DOWN ONE: *Memory Is Short Longing:* LP
On the one hand, I feel bad comparing Sigh Down One to My Bloody Valentine because those are mighty



big shoes to fill. On the other hand, the comparison is apt and hard to escape from. I mean, if this came out at some point during the late '80s or early '90s, you would have already heard of them, and they would have been touted as the punky Québécois My Bloody Valentine. The vocals have the same inviting ethereal calmness as Bilinda Butcher's. The guitars don't get as big and devouring as Kevin Shields', but they have a rawness and urgency that lends credence to their output. Great pick for those who enjoy shoegaze and punk, as this is fine portrayal of their intersection. Really good stuff. –Vincent (IFB / L'œil du Tigre)

SLOPPY KISSES: ***New Pompeii:*** **7"**
Lo-fi, punk rock'n'roll with clean guitars and take-no-shit vocals for fans of classic stuff like the Dangerhouse catalog and even '70s and '80s U.K. punk a la Vice Squad. Best line: "I'll kick you in the face!" Limited run on bright green vinyl. Get 'em while they're hot. –Candace Hansen (Jonny Cat)

SLUTET: ***När Helvetet Brunnit Mot Sitt Slut:*** **LP**
Crusty metallic punk from Sweden. Downtuned guitars, guttural vocals, Discharge-influenced drum beats, and the usual trappings abound. –Jimmy Alvarado (Insane Society)

SO WHAT: ***Hard Gum:*** **LP**
By any reasonable calculation, there are probably three or four A sides lurking in this post-junkshop thicket; that puts it even with *Slayed?*, ahead of *Slade in Flame*, and just behind the first U.S. Sweet album—not bad work, all things considered. Among the notables, "What You Do to Me" is a fine album-launching stomper—no doubt Jason Duncan's most successful attempt to channel the tribal mojo of his long-standing aesthetic wet dreams, the Equals. "What You Said" is kinda "What You Do to Me" junior, the brilliant cover of Chris Andrews' "Yo Yo" (hey, it was #7 in South Africa in 1970! What, you haven't been paying attention?) is the album's acme, and "Don't Come Back" must have been written about a different girl than "What You Do to Me." The lesser lights are generally awright but rather charmless—the lyrics in stuff like "Don't Wanna Come Back to You" (which is, to be clear, a different song than "Don't Come Back") comes across more like an almost Trumpian paucity of ideas and vocabulary than it does a bare bones Gary Glitteresque itch-scratch, not that that was necessarily the intended target to begin with. That said, the punk rock aspect of things tends to sand down the gaps between the haves and have-nots; if I still had parties at my house I assure you I'd at least play the first side. BEST SONG THAT WASN'T A #7 HIT IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 1970: "What You Do to Me." BEST SONG TITLE: "My Life Is Tight." *Psych!* FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The "Just Add Water" wordmark is typeset in the font called "fanzine." I know this because I typeset it like twenty years ago! –Rev. Nørb (Just Add Water / Surfin' Ki)

SOMERSET MEADOWS: ***We Will Rock:*** **7"**
Woof. Listening to this 7" was a total ear-flagellation and not something I was prepared for when I sat down to write reviews on this sunny Texas afternoon. I really don't know where to begin, so I'll just make a list of things that Somerset Meadows could improve for their next go-round: sticking to a solid tempo, songwriting, singing in key, writing lyrics, playing their instruments, and recording / mixing. The front cover is just a picture of a dry erase board that has "We will rock!!!" scribbled on it over and over, à la Bart Simpson but with worse handwriting. And it looks like they created the typeface for their band name in Microsoft Paint. The art on the back cover, however, is quite good, which sort of confuses me in that it's so superior to everything else about the 7". Pretty puzzlingly incongruous, if you ask me. I was so impressed by the back cover that I even thought about giving the EP a second listen, but alas—I couldn't bring myself to do lower the needle again. Huh, guess I'm less of a masochist than I previously thought. –Simone Carter (Brain Genius)

SONGS FOR MOMS: ***Rivers:*** **12" EP**
Cute, tender, and tough, *Rivers* channels pop punk, indie, and folky country vibes through a Bay Area queer punk lens that will make your heart skip a beat. Songs are oldies, written between 2010-2012, but recorded in 2016 and finally released this year to commemorate the band's ten-year anniversary. It's hard to believe they wrote these songs as mere babes. There is some seriously smart writing here, complete with interesting progressions that weave beautiful harmonies and melodies between bursts of angst, space, and odd tempo digressions that are so rad and rare. The A side has five songs, the B side a silk-screened band photo. This record is guaranteed to make you want to dance and cry simultaneously. Seriously, it's that good. –Candace Hansen (Rumbletown)

SPECTRES, THE: ***Baby, You're Too Pretty to Rumble:*** **CS**
Self-described as a "two-piece rock'n'roll doo-wop trash" group, these guys sound like a slightly budget version of something you might find on one of the old *Back from the Grave* compilations. Lo-fi and trashy garage rock is what's happening here, complete with the predictable garage punk imagery of switchblade knives and '60s rockabilly-styled women—something that every garage rock fan has seen a million times. If you're able to look past these tired, played-out garage rock clichés, the ten songs here are executed and delivered well. –Mark Twistworthy (King Pizza, kingpizzarecords.storenvy.com)

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SPENCER MOODY AND THE ANZALONES: *An Old Man Called Me Bud Cort:* LP
Moody and another guy, Anthony Anzalone, do an LP's worth of strained, snarling, lumbering rock songs, with Moody doing to the bulk of the instrumentation himself. With their cover of "Bird on a Wire," and Moody's well-known art-damaged persona and gravel-studded vocals, the Leonard Cohen comparison's gonna loom pretty big, but that's okay. A droning, spitfire collection of tunes that at their peak—such as the ballad-like "Worm Across" and the shimmering "This Is the New Age"—more than make up for the few moments of glaring cheesiness, like when Moody and Anzalone howl like dogs in one of the songs. Moody did a live cassette some time back, five songs with a full band, and between that and this LP, the guy is proving to have a significant number of solid, memorable songs in him. For the most part this is riveting stuff, definitely my favorite release this review cycle. –Keith Rosson (Let's Pretend)

STATE FUNERAL: *Tory Party Prison:* *7"* Flexi
The cassette has risen from the grave in recent years as a musical format and it seems that the flexidisc is following suit. Flexipunk is an offshoot of Boss Tuneage, and has hit the ground running with a slew of releases. This is the second of that venture and features a band from the Southeast of England, not a resurrection of the defunct Welsh band of the same name. The six tracks have a dirty, raw quality, which fits perfectly with State Funeral's hardcore approach. It's not bad, but based on this, I'd rather listen to my fellow Welshmen. –Rich Cocksedge (Flexipunk)

STEAMY WOLVES: *Sun/No King:* CS
It's rare to hear a cassette that doesn't cleave more or less recognizably to one of the dozens of subgenres that comprise the world of punk, but Steamy Wolves has done something truly weird on this cassette. Exploring the dark netherworld between hardcore and electronic, the tracks are glitchy techno arrangements that lurch from flute or saxophone solos to industrial noise, set off by distorted screaming vocals. The cassette recalls the noise punk releases from the early 2000s from bands like Black Eyes and Arab On Radar, but the range is greater: sometimes borderline danceable with free jazz accents, sometimes borderline unlistenable with inexplicably groovy percussive accents. It sounds like a demonic robot who likes jazz is mad at you. Worth hearing if that's your kinda thing. –Lyle (Self-released, steamywolves.bandcamp.com)

STRAND, THE: *Seconds Waiting:* LP
A reissue of 1983 album by a now-obscure power pop band hailing from Virginia, recorded at Hit & Run Studios, better known for being the place where hardcore legends Void recorded their first demo. True to the style and the era, there's a nice balance between saccharine pop and punk energy—'60s harmonic echoes and '80s verve here—at times recalling bands like The Last and maybe even a bit of Elvis Costello. One of those rare reissues where historical significance meets good listening. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dig!)

STREET CLONES / THRILLKILLERS: Split: 7"
Street Clones are a rock'n'roll punk band doing an Antiseen-sounding thing but with a peculiar-sounding vocalist—which was at first hard to swallow—but ended up totally working for me. On the flipside, Thillkillers is a punk band from Australia that includes an ex-member of '90s grind mainstays Rupture, although they're doing something much different here. Their two songs reminded me at some points of The Lewd, while not sounding anything like them. Does that make any sense? Overall, the split is an odd pairing of non-mainstream of punk rock that works pretty well together. –Mark Twistworthy (Mystery School)

STREET EATERS: *The Envoy:* LP
"This album is inspired by the writing of Ursula K. Le Guin, mainly *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*." Le Guin is a radical science fiction writer who came to prominence at a time when few were flocking to the "lowbrow" genre—let alone women. Street Eaters, from Berkeley, Calif., which is also coincidently the birth place of Le Guin, is a drum and bass duo comprised of Megan March (Wild Assumptions) and John No (Fleshies). Although lacking guitar, Street Eaters still delivers a meteoric impact: the tom-heavy drumming, March's full-bodied shouts, and No's nasally yells flood each song with a frenzied energy. When they perform, a shared synapse fires and the married couple synchronistically wallop their instruments. On "Paralyzed," No begins, "My legs are stiffening. I wonder why? / I sit all day in the still still air," and March replies, "You sit and watch my motions / Follow my motions, feel what I feel." The harmonious call and response encapsulates their unified attack, for there isn't a single wasted beat, shout, or blown-out bass note. Every song, ambient interlude, and incisive lyric cuts to the bone and demonstrates that sometimes less is more. –Sean Arenas (Nervous Intent, nervousintent.com / Contraszt!, diyordie.net)

STRETCH MARKS: *Who & What: The Complete Studio Recordings:* CD
Sounds Escaping has remastered and reissued two classic Winnipeg punk rock bands recently. While Personality Crisis fall more into the rock'n'roll aspect of punk, Stretch Marks fully land in the hardcore end of the spectrum. This disc collects the entire studio discography of the band and reminds you that while the central prairies of Canada may not have the most famous punk bands

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in the nation, they produced some of the best. If you're unfamiliar with the Stretchies, this is the perfect way to get in the know. –Ty Stranglehold (Sounds Escaping, soundsescaping.com)

STUNTMEN, THE: Self-titled: CD
Punk rock served straight up with a sidecar of rock to help it all go down. These cats sound a bit older than the "parrot" punk kiddie crowd—lived a bit, fucked up on occasion, maybe ain't quite yet learned not to keep hand from flame, but certainly not gonna preach like they have all the fuckin' answers. I can easily see 'em plopped mid-slot at Cafe NELA with Barrio Tiger and Million Kids on the bill. –Jimmy Alvarado (Self-released)

SUBJECTS RULERS: Self-titled: CS
This eight-song cassette is full-on '90s screamo. I was a big fan of the genre for a long time but all the shitty early 2000s Hot Topic screamo really turned me off to the genre on the whole. However, after this dormant period in my life it's nice to hear a band bringing back the sound of bands like Envy and Portraits Of Past. If you've heard '90s screamo then you know what you're getting. Subjects Rulers isn't necessarily unique but it's too bad these guys broke up, because I really dig what they're laying down. –Kurt Morris (IFB)

SWEETHEART SEBASTIAN: *L'Amoure N'est Plus Qu'un Rêve:* 7" EP
Just on the edgier side of pop punk, this 7" from Montréal's Sweetheart Sebastian—which they stylize as S<3S—has some surf qualities, though it's hard to tell if that comes from the droney guitar or the lo-fi mixing in the vocals. It's somewhere between Flipper and Nada Surf, with some predictability but also some surprising, dynamic shifts. A perfect summer set, the kind that can fill up a basement as you're airing it out of its winter stench. –Theresa W. (Blade And Blood)

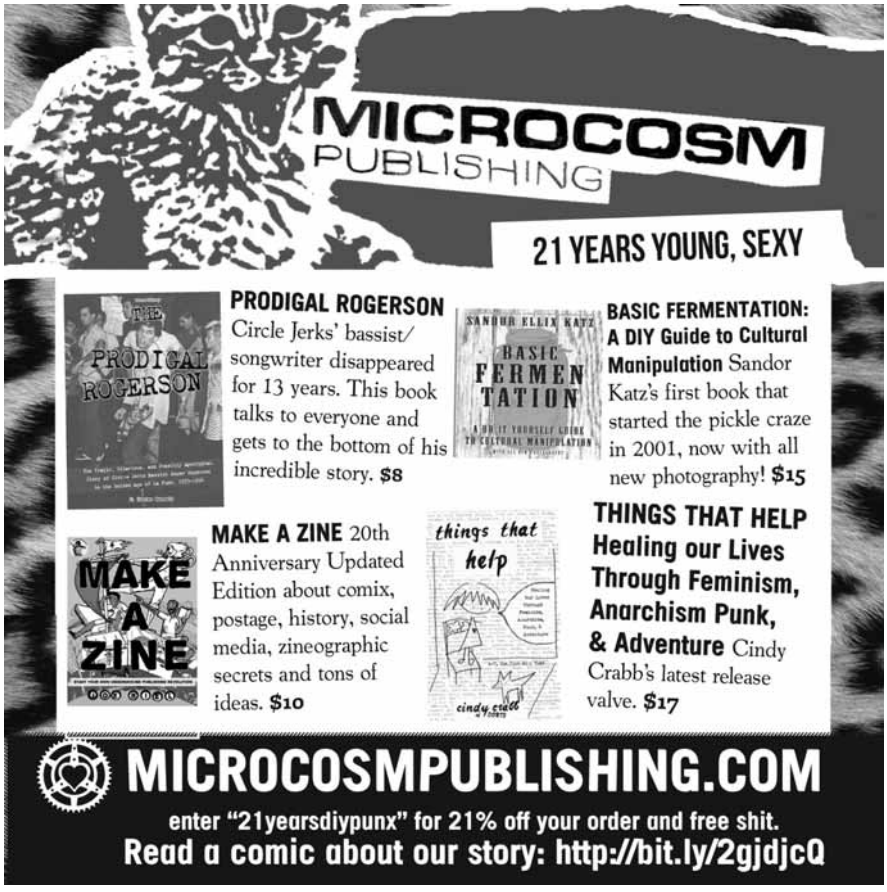
SWEETHEART SEBASTIAN: *Volume 1:* CD
A collection of assorted recordings by this Montreal band, whose name is sometimes "S<3S," apparently a shortening of "Sweetheart Sebastian." The crème here are potent, punchy doses of straightforward punk loosely in the Ramones mold, with the rest sounding more like rough demos, some with drum machines providing a backbeat. –Jimmy Alvarado (Blade And Blood)

SYNDROME 81 / URBAN SAVAGE: Split: 7"
A monster of a split between two of Europe's best bands. Syndrome 81 are from Brest, France and straddle a pretty fine line between classic French oi and USHC. They seem to shave a little bit of the USHC off with every release and bring out a little more melody in its place, but their records are consistently top notch and this one is another moving in the same direction. Both tracks are solid drivers with shouted vocals and dark guitar lines pushed to the back of the mix. It's an interesting trick and sets a moody, atmospheric vibe for their side of the split. Urban Savage, from Malmö, Sweden, also mix some classic street punk sounds (though their influence comes more from UK82) and USHC. Their cuts are stompers and slow way down from their previous record 7". (Full disclosure, I handled the American distribution for their last record.) These guys sing in English, and though English is their second language, they write better than pretty much any American punk or HC band. They contribute two songs, the straight-forward punker "Cruel New World" and the angular stomper "Darwin among the Machines," both solid tracks with lyrics dealing with apocalyptic themes and a disassociation with humanity. Fantastic release, though I think it's already very hard to get. –Ian Wise (Offside)

SYSTEM, THE: *Live:* LP
Well-recorded live record from this U.K. anarcho punk band. It gets off to a slow start with the five-minute, dirgey title track of their 1987 debut album, but picks up after that, plowing through songs from their '80s material alongside tracks from their newest album, released just last year, all flowing together seamlessly. Clearly influenced by the early anarcho scene in England, elements of Subhumans and Crass shine through. If you've never heard this band, this live record—which actually sounds like an early '80s studio recording—is a great place to start. –Chad Williams (Grow Your Own / Global Resistance)

SYSTEM, THE: *Slave to the Machine:* LP
I freely admit I picked this out of the piles wholly for smartass reasons: saw it as a prime opportunity to prattle on about how nice it was to see "The System" had finally gotten a band together to finally counter its constantly being slagged off by decades of punk bands. Didn't take long, however, to figure out this is a new release by the old U.K. anarcho punk band, and it took only seconds into the first song to shut me up right quick. Ten brand new tracks, recorded over three days, of some of the finest tuneage the circle-A set have unleashed in quite a long while. Every song's a ripper from end to end, start to finish, with topical lyrics and a sound that falls somewhere between Rudimentary Peni and One Way System, if that makes any sense. Helluva release, this, and comes highly recommended. Mouth, say hello to crow. –Jimmy Alvarado (Grow Your Own)

THINGZ, THE: *The Vault of Tomorrow:* LP
The Thingz, from Long Beach, Calif., play scuzzy rockabilly. They cover The Cramps' "Human Fly," which just about sums up their sound; however, they lack Lux Interior's mischievousness and that band's sinister edge. Honestly, in revisiting The Cramps, I realized that The Thingz are too sanitary. I like my rockabilly sleazy, mean, and perfect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for soundtracking a John Waters' flick. –Sean Arenas (Coffee Addict)

THROWING STUFF:
***Fit, Fine & Well:* LP/CD**
It's been four years since I first heard the thrashy cacophony produced by the aptly named Throwing Stuff and I had long considered the band to have been despatched to the annals of history. Imagine my delight to discover that not only was the band still in existence but that a debut album was in the cards, too. *Fit, Fine & Well* continues in the same vein, with a frantic hardcore delivery featuring one of my favorite vocalists. Ben Small manages to sound like he's in a breathless rage most of the time, which adds to the whole sense of agitation which emanates from Throwing Stuff. I'm also looking forward to see the band live soon, as well when it supports Clowns. –Rich Cocksedge (TNS)

TOTALOVE:
***Lo Que Toco Lo Destruyo:* 7" Flexi**
Great buzzing guitar! This is really good. I can't seem to find out much about Totalove on the internet so all credit to Aston at Boss Tuneage for getting this Mexican band on his new imprint. This would be perfect as the sound of Mexico mobilizing itself against Trump's farcical wall; combining anger with urgency, all topped off by an awesome guitar sound. Marginally reminiscent of Ruidosa Immundicia, a favorite of mine, so no surprise that I like this. –Rich Cocksedge (Flexipunk, aston@bosstuneage.com, bosstuneage.com)

TRAVERSE: *Winter Songs from Summer Bruises:* 7"
Earnest, melodic punk rock from France which shakes up the form with nods to Midwestern emo tropes favored by bands like Braid. White vinyl and elaborate packaging, featuring full-color tour photos and lyrics. –Michael T. Fournier (Brassneck)

TURBONEGRO: *"Hot for Nietzsche"/ "Special Education":* CS
Let's ignore for the moment that I know that Turbonegro is a band with a thirty year history. And, for just a moment, I'll shut up the PC part of my brain that wants to bring up my issues with the Turbonegro name. If we strip all that away, what we have here is a two-song cassette, collecting both of Turbonegro's recent singles. The sound is cock rock meets—you know what, fuck it, it's just cock rock. The machismo-dripping, testosterone-spitting, hair metal strut bullshit that I thought was behind all of us. I can't find any joy in this overly masculine, male gaze riff rock. The humor is juvenile, the music unexciting. This cassette will be proudly played in frat houses and sausages parties by bros who just want to fuck across the world. And fuck that. –Bryan Static (Burger)

TWIN PIGS: *Chaos Baby:* LP
These Swedes have a schizophrenic sound and it works. Choppy, melodic punk sounds with a slight off-kilter edge but then really raw vocals over the top with some female backups. The result is something that moves with melody like the Vicious or one of those Nordic melodic punk bands of yesteryear, but with a harsh punk edge to it. It still blows my mind that there are so many great bands out there I haven't heard of! This shit is smokin'. –Tim Brooks (Luftslott, luftslotterecords.se)

UROCHROMES: *Night Bully:* 7"
Ah, the sickness that is Urochromes. Twisted, fast punk riffs propelled by drum machine beats that have more attitude than I'm comfortable with a machine having. Let the raw noise satiate the filthiest sections of your mind, and just when you've become one with grime, let the final track repurpose your decaying body for the sake of all that is meaningful. "Every lover needs a 15 minute romance. You should know that. YOU should really know that." It's almost too good. –Daryl (Wharf Cat)

UV-TV: *Glass:* LP
The festivities start off aggressive—taut, punchy garage punk with slashing guitars, a rhythm section that's digging in their heels and pummeling away, all counterbalanced by flat, laid back vocals that'd go just as well fronting a straight pop or shoegaze band. Just when you're sure you've got 'em pegged, they switch gears around the midpoint and veer off into potent post-punk land. Sound scary to ye? Maybe, but they fuckin' nail it from the raging opener to the softer swan song. –Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Birds of a Feather Flock Together Vol. 1:* CD
Rock-solid comp here put together by what looks to be like the folks from Anthrax (the old anarcho punk band, not the New York dirthead band). Lotta topical subjects addressed throughout, as can be expected, with twenty bands both well-known and more obscure, vets and new-jacks—Sanction This, Hagar The Womb, Anthrax, Terminal Heads, Burnt Cross, Virus, Andy T, Dogshite, Hysteria Ward, Flowers In The Dustbin, Feroxide, Surgery Without Research, Slug, Eslege, Pedagree Skum, The Committed, The System, Liberty, Contempt, and Burning Flag—turning in a variety of sounds from punk's corners, from trad U.K. anarchy fare, to ska-tinged workouts, to hardcore, to dark post-punk, to stuff that sounds like it could be New Model Army outtakes, and so on. Just when you think the comp format is all but run into the ground, something comes along to give ye hope… and they throw in a fanzine with a page dedicated to each band, to boot. Very nice work that comes highly recommended. –Jimmy Alvarado (Grow Your Own)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Columbus Blood:* LP
If your town, like mine, has a bar/venue that someone converted from a doublewide trailer thirty years ago that supports live music seven days a

week, then this compilation will make total sense to you. It's like a love letter to your city's nightlife, inhabited by every kind of storied band character imaginable. Psyche, soul rock, metal, indie twee pop, straight-up cock rock, an instrumental track for good measure, all wrapped up in a big rock'n'roll party burrito with stale beer sauce. Mind the bathroom, there's pee on the floor and there's a thin layer of white powder residue on the back of the toilet. –Matt Seward (Break-Up)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *OH70 Volume One:* 7"
Four singles by four Ohio outfits. Each band does one of their songs, then a cover by an older Ohio band. It's a simple concept that works well here. I will leave the covers aside so you will be surprised when you buy it. Brat Curse has a definite Marked Men vibe going. Mr. Tiger sounds like The Weirdos have gotten some play in the past. Betty Machete And The Angry Cougars have a kickass name and a Plasmatics feel, to boot. Senior Citizen And The Border Patrol round it all out with an early Black Flag point of reference. Who knew Ohio had such a sinister cauldron brewing? Sip slowly and enjoy. –Sean Koepenick (OH70)

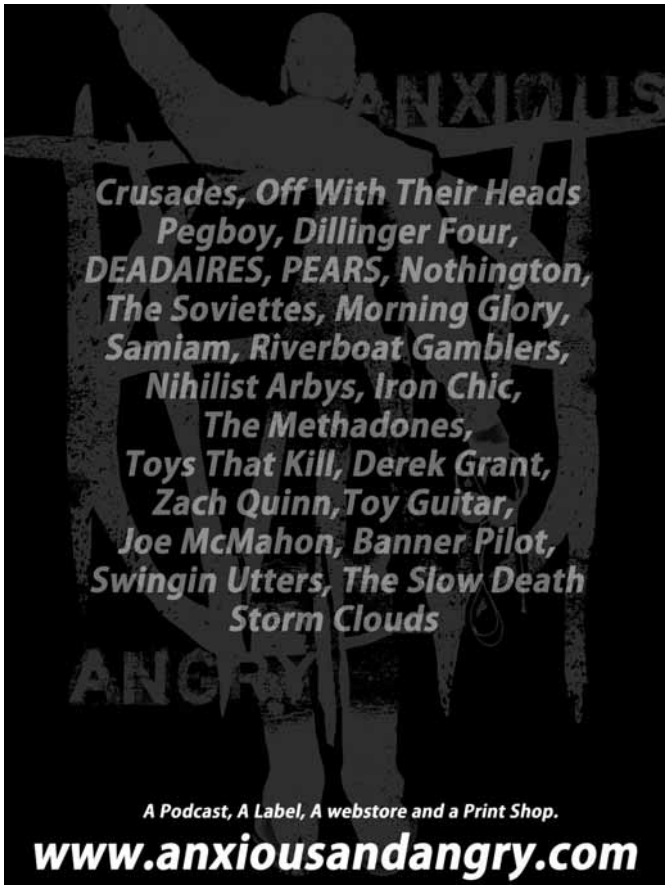
VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Thank You, San Francisco!:* LP
For the past while, I've gotten excited whenever I see an email blast from Jerry Connolly (aka Smart Guy Records) in my inbox, as the only time I receive emails from him is when Smart Guy has something new in the works. The label has been a dependable purveyor of fine tunes. And this comp ain't an exception. The concept behind this comp is pretty rad. Rather than highlighting bands from San Francisco, Mr. Connolly decided to show respect by highlighting bands that he met because of residing in the fair city by the bay. All but one band calls somewhere besides the City their home, but all bands make pretty stellar contributions, ranging from guitar weirdness, to post-punk, straight up punk, garage rock, and psych pop. Standout tracks from Dan Melchior, Kelley Stoltz, Paté Snot, and Clorox Girls. If this were a radio program, I'd definitely be tuning in next week. –Vincent (Smart Guy)

VICIOUS CIRCLE: *Rhyme with Reason/ Into the Void:* 2 x LP
A pair of albums from this Australian punk/thrash outfit get the reissue treatment; these two being originally released in '87 and '88 respectively. Bands like Christ On Parade or Attitude Adjustment definitely come to mind, though, unfortunately, Vicious Circle doesn't reach the stature of either of those bands. Mid-paced, punchy, with all the politics and overly dramatic musical missteps of the era included (the almost-funk vocal approach in "Deaf Ears" is kinda wince-worthy). I hate to say it, but a lot of this stuff sounds pretty dated. Which is too bad, because this is so clearly a massive labor of love: heavy-ass purple vinyl, full-color booklet with liner notes, lyrics, flyers, photos; there's a clear reverence towards the original packaging and spirit. People sank a lot of heart and cash into this, and while it wasn't for me, fans of the band and era will likely be very stoked. –Keith Rosson (Power It Up)

VIRUS: *System Failure:* LP
The first proper Virus full length since 2002. I kind of thought the late '90s/early '00s Punkcore Records thing was something we should all be forgetting at this point, but this is an unexpected non-embarrassing return for a band from that scene. The first thing you'll notice is that the record design is actually really good, and there are exactly zero spreads of the band showing off their hair or spiky jackets. Second, the music has moved in an unexpected direction, like they've retained all the elements of their old sound (lots of simple minor-key guitar riffs over the chord progressions, the pogo drum beat, et cetera) but adopted some more melodic components of No Idea bands. They honestly sound like they've listened to a lot of Dear Landlord the past few years. The lyrics are pretty straight forward, but address some actual political issues. It's nice to see a band like this step gracefully into punk adulthood, hopefully retaining the interest of their older fans and possibly garnering relevance with a younger crowd. –Ian Wise (Evacuate, evacuaterecords.com)

VISCERA: *Hollywood Lockout Dayze:* EP
Don't assume all Mexicans see America as the promised land. Rafael Buzea prefers the warm friendliness of his native Mexico City and the peaceful shorelines of Tijuana to the "*gringo* rigidity" of American cities. The Viscera frontman and his younger brother, guitarist Chris Buzea, spent their childhoods moving all over North America. They've since built a nest for themselves in the heart of Hollywood, Los Angeles, a band practice space they call the lockout. Rounding out the Viscera family is bassist Marko Polo, a native Italian who's toured with heavy metal bands across Europe, and brand new drummer Moses. Together they create a powerful, ear-shattering message of smashing borders between nations, people, and musical genres. The sound of Viscera can best be described by the title of their music video, "Dirty Punk Fuck." Rhythmically, the songs speed up and slow down in strategic intervals so the listener's ear doesn't become paralyzed by the chaos. Viscera played over fifty shows in their first four months together, including dates in Belize, where no other American artist had ever previously performed. You can catch them playing all over L.A., but if you do, prepare your neck for a gnarly bangover the next morning. –Michelle Kirk (LA Rehearsal Studios)

VIVID SEKT: *Who Protects Us from Ourselves?:* 7" EP
Three tracks from a Portland group comprised of members of Arctic



Flowers and Moral Hex. This sounds like it was very much influenced by early '80s U.K. anarcho punk, with things leaning more towards the sensibilities of quasi-goth punkers like The Mob than the more martial skronk of Crass or Dirt. Lyrics are intelligent and poetic while keeping their point in focus; the songs are memorable and well executed. Thumbs up. –Jimmy Alvarado (Black Water)

WARM BODIES: ***Domo:*** **7"**
In such shitty, fucked, damn near apocalyptic post-election times, Kansas City's Warm Bodies have so much going right for them in a region not conducive to outsider ways. Musically, it's the perfect storm of a barrage of influences including punk, hardcore, garage, and a smidgen of psychedelic rock. The reverb on the demented vocals is the cherry on top of some of the most originally manic punk you'll hear anytime soon. I can only imagine that their live shows are a sight to behold. Not to be missed. –Juan Espinosa (Neck Chop)

WATCHING ME FALL: ***Crossroads:*** **LP**
Polish hardcore with an anti-fascist message. There are also some thrash and crossover elements present here. Watching Me Fall is a talented band creating good songs and presenting them here in a unique and impactful way. Best to them. –Jon Mule (Black Wednesday, black-wednesday.pl, Pasazer, pasazer.pl)

WESTERN ADDICTION: ***Tremulous:*** **CD**
I had the pleasure of interviewing Western Addiction in 2015 and jokingly asked them if their new album would be done before another Bush was running the country. Fuck me! Could I have been more wrong?! The joke was a nod to the twelve-year span between 2005's *Cognicide* and this album—only their second full-length release—and the way that the band seems to sing about the kind of twisted, dystopian world that many of us associate with George I, Dubya, and Jeb. I had no idea what 2017 would hold for the country and how fittingly Western Addiction's tightly focused, lightning-fast punk reminiscent of '80s hardcore would feel so appropriate. As much as their music calls back to the past, the band masterfully avoids the trap of rehashing old sounds. Instead, it creates something totally fresh and new. Lyrically, head songwriter Jason Hall is always on another planet with songs like "Masscult, Vulgarians, and Entitlement." Western Addiction is just what the apocalypse ordered. –Jon Mule (Fat Wreck)

WET THE ROPE:
The Sum of Our Scars: **LP**
A debut album of self-described "emotional hardcore" from a new band comprised of participants with thirty years of experience making a racket. Sexual abuse is the common lyrical thread throughout, the music is angry and artsy, yet not too annoyingly so, and they have the good sense to keep the songs fairly direct and eschewing any unnecessarily self-indulgent "musical explorations." Not my bag, but admittedly engaging and much better than I expected. I imagine they'll take that as faint praise but is not intended as such. –Jimmy Alvarado (Adagio830)

WHIPPING POST:
Taste the Whip:7" **Flexi**
I frequently shudder when I see a band being compared to Black Flag, as those are big boots—in any of its guises—to step into. However, with Whipping Post it's definitely an apt starting point. The vocals bleed bile over a thick and scuzzy guitar whilst the rhythm section lurches all over the place and it conjures up images of Ginn and Co. plundering their instruments in the name of being sheer bloody-minded. The final track, "Pull the Cord," would also sit well on an AmRep compilation such is its aural belligerence. Whipping Post has to release an album. –Rich Cocksedge (Flexipunk)

WHITE NIGHT: ***Weird Night:*** **CS**
I dunno, guys. On one hand, this band's been around for quite a while and they've graced the pages of *Razorcake* before. Clearly they're well-liked, and they've been tilling this sound for a while. There are elements of surf, psych, and pop all at play, all of it moored in this gritty garage/punk foundation. It's all a little off, a little weird, with keyboards and solos and distortion and effects and reverb all tumbling for supremacy.… It's abundantly clear there's a lot at play here, but none of it really stands out. We just seem to be *inundated* with bands like this right now, and it's hard to tell them apart or get truly gut-punched by one when so many of them sound interchangeable to me. White Night certainly knows what they're doing, but to this listener *Weird Night* just lacked that necessary something needed to set it apart. –Keith Rosson (Burger)

WLOCHATY: ***For Sale:*** **LP**
Timely reissue of one of the longest-running Polish anarchist bands, originally released during a period where liberal leftism was unpopular. This band started in the late '80s, heavily influenced by U.K. anarchist bands like Conflict, Crass, and later something more akin to USHC. This LP was recorded live in 1987 and, while being pretty rough, shines with punk attitude and optimism. –Tim Brooks (Pasazer)

YOGURT BRAIN: ***VOL. 3 Revenge of the Baloney Fairy:*** **LP**
Oakland's Yogurt Brain plays inspired, lo-fi pop songs by and for punks. This LP is a true treat for those into unassuming, fun, mildly stupid swayable tunes. There's everything to love about this genuine, intensely magical musical concoction. You'll have Yogurt Brain on the brain for days on end after these songs get stuck in your head. –Art Ettinger (Office Dorm)

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• **Almost Ready,** 135 Huntington St., Brooklyn, NY 11231
• **Antena Krzyku,** ul. Army 20, 35-307 Rzeszow, Poland
• **Australian Cattle God,** 1514 Ed Bluestein Blvd. #107, Austin, TX 78721
• **Bad Wolf,** 13216 Pond Springs Rd., Austin, TX 78729
• **Bcore,** C/ Montmany, 25, 08012 Barcelona, Spain
• **Beach Impediment,** PO Box 26348, Richmond, VA 23260
• **Beer City,** 5317 Burnham St. #20, Milwaukee, WI 53219
• **Black Water,** PO Box 5223, Portland, OR 97208
• **Bonsound,** 160 Saint-Viateur St. East, Suite 400, Montreal, QC H2T 1A8, Canada
• **Brassneck,** 8 Hatherleigh Rd., Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 4AR, United Kingdom
• **Break-Up,** PO Box 15372, Columbus, OH 43215
• **Burger,** 645 S. State College Blvd., #A, Fullerton, CA 92831
• **Community,** 839 Roosevelt Pl., New Orleans, LA 70119
• **Concrete Jungle,** PO Box 810 427, 90249 Nürnberg, Germany
• **Damaged Goods,** PO Box 45854, London E11 1YX, UK
• **Dead Broke,** 139 Huber Ave., Holbrook, NY 11741
• **Deface The Music** c/o Rosasharon Gripton, 4832B Ave. du Parc, Montreal, QC H2V 4E6, Canada
• **Deranged,** c/o Gordon Dufresne, 2700 Lower Rd., Roberts Creek, BC V0N 2W4, Canada
• **Dig!,** 212-A Loudon St. SE, Leesburg, VA 20175
• **Dirt Cult,** 7930 NE Prescott St., Portland, OR 97218
• **Domino,** 20 Jay St., Suite 626, Brooklyn, NY 11201
• **Dull-Fi,** PO Box 15372, Columbus, OH 43215
• **Fat Wreck Chords,** 2196 Palou Ave., SF, CA 94124
• **Flexipunk,** PO Box 124, Belford, Northumberland, UK, NE66 9EE
• **Forbidden Dimension,** 219 21st Ave. NW, Calgary, AB T2M 1J4 Canada
• **Fucking Scam,** 95 Lester St., Moncton, New Brunswick, EIC 4T6, Canada
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• **Pasazer,** PO Box 42, 39-201 Debica 3, Poland
• **Passenger,** PO Box 42, 3 39-201 Debica, Poland
• **Poison City,** PO Box 2009, Fitzroy, VIC 3065 Australia
• **Power It Up,** Zum Holzfelde 12, 31226 Peine, Germany
• **Red Scare,** PO Box 13285, Chicago, IL 60613
• **Rerun,** PO Box 22472, St. Louis, MO 63126-0472
• **Resipiscent,** 738 Haight, SF, CA 94117
• **Oops Baby,** 1731 Clifton Way SE, Atlanta, GA 30316
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• **Sorry State,** 317 W. Morgan St., Suite 105, Raleigh, NC 27601
• **Spirit Of The Streets,** Inh. Mark Lorenz, Schwiesaustr. 11, D-39124 Magdeburg, Germany
• **Stuntmen, The,** c/o Karkass, 10124 16th Ave. S, Seattle, WA 98168
• **Tankcrimes,** PO Box 3495, Oakland, CA 94609
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–Jim Joyce
EARTH FIRST! WINTER 2016/2017

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BROKEN PENCIL #74, $5.95, 9" x 11¾", 64 pgs.
This issue of this slick Canadian magazine about zine culture is essentially devoted to a collective gag response to the incoming Trump administration. The start of the issue is front loaded with several zinester essays expressing various forms of anxiety to what the new administration will portend and what forms of resistance zinesters can begin honing. The forms of protest quickly explored includes building closer community ties, making artistic statements, and zine-ing all the harder. There's also a sort of misguided-sounding essay on why people should give Melania Trump a chance and learn to appreciate her. Giving her a break seems especially distasteful now in light of her libel suit against *The Daily Mail* for claiming a negative article damaged her opportunity to make millions from her highly visible "brand." There is also a quick article containing micro-interviews with working artists to examine how they make a creative life financially viable, a lot of zine and book reviews, and two quick fiction selections to round things out. Probably the most fascinating thing about this issue in light of America's Trumpian rise, is realizing that this zine is sponsored through the Canadian government through various grants. That concept is looking more and more like a rare unicorn here in the U.S. over the next several years. –Adrian Salas (Broken Pencil, PO Box 203 Station P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S2S7 Canada, brokenpencil.com)

CABILDO QUARTERLY #17, $?, 5½" x 8½", 14 pgs.
Cabildo Quarterly is a litmag with a zine aesthetic. I'm into that. Herein, Michael T. Fournier and Jeff Schroeck (of The Ergs!, yes) put out their short fiction. Fournier's half is a selection from his upcoming novel, Inferno Jones, and though Schroeck doesn't mention anything about a book of his own, "Out Where the River Broke" feels like part of something larger, too. In Fournier's piece, "The First Four Years," a young woman, Jeannie, opens a bar in an unnamed college town. Things are going well. She's got the place sponsoring peewee baseball leagues, and the pub draws a crowd of friendly regulars. And that's when the nasty rumors start going. We'll need Inferno Jones to know what we're missing. Jeff Schroeck's "Out Where the River Broke" is set somewhere in blue collar America. But instead of a scrappy business owner, our hero is a recovering addict, Ray. Ray's back in town after years away. To make a little cash he buys some teens a twelve pack. But instead of bonding over Metallica or all the things they could've done, they beat the dickens out of him. Officer Jim, a guy Ray knows from his childhood, finds Ray covered in blood in a public park. Now that's what I'm talking about, drama! Both selections are engaging. I'd keep reading them if they were longer. So what's to say? If you're like me, you're okay at reading popular "classic" American authors, but you're not so hot at following independent publishers and less infamous writers. Both Fournier and Schroeck write compelling stuff, and the sense of punk awareness and interest in underdoggery that each writer brings to the page is an added bonus. Check it out. –Jim Joyce (michealtfournier@gmail.com, jeffreyschroeck@gmail.com)

CAN YOU DEAL?, $10, 2½"x 5½", copied, 56 pgs.
This is a zine that was obviously a labor of love for zine creator Jennifer Clavin, who is also the singer/songwriter of the band Bleached. The band recently released an EP with the same title. Both the title song and the zine are an exploration and an exasperated expression of feelings about repeatedly being asked "What is it like being a girl in a band?" Further exploring the implications of this question—along with the emotional tug of war the question stirs up—this zine is a collection of articles, poetry, and art from women in music, answering this question. Or perhaps, answering the question about the question. Although there doesn't seem to be an obvious answer, there are very clear similarities of the experiences of sexism in the music industry. With articles from Tegan Quin (Tegan and Sara) describing how it felt to be labeled as "Tampon Rock," to Patty Schemel (Upset, Hole) speaking of playing drums until she bleeds, I felt inspired, connected, moved, and most of all, provoked and engaged intellectually. How complex the gender dynamics are within the music scene. Clavin describes the zine in its introduction; "It is for everyone feigning surprise every time a woman plugs in and plays well, gets behind the drums, or has the sickest bass style. It is 2017. Can you deal yet?" This zine is a beautiful and genuine collection of personal experiences that are not only touching, but very articulate and thoughtfully constructed. –Rosie Gonce (canyoudealzine.com, hellobleached.com)

CANS ON A SHELF: A PHOTOZINE & EULOGY,
$7 ppd., 8½" x 5½", color-copied cardstock, 30 pgs.
This is a full color photo zine this fellow Bryan put together of his friends. He shows a deep affection for his people and they seem comfortable posing for him on the fly in the woods or on trains. It would be so easy for this zine to be self-indulgent, grandstanding about how cute, freaky, or interesting his milieu is. But it's all in the tone and this has a warm and human one. –Craven Rock (blackmold.storeenvy.com, brybry@riseup.com)

DEEP FRIED ZINE MPLS #11, $1, 5½" x 8½", 24 pgs.
What we have here is a crispy, yumbo treat from the northern Midwest. The hungry people at Deep Fried Zine MPLS batter up another steamy batch of fast food news and rock and roll interviews. What's in the happy meal? We got a story on a family that protested outside a Mickey D's to get that McRib back. We got food-related interviews with groups like Fiji 13, Monica LaPlante, and Real Numbers. You want to know how many burgers Real Numbers ate on tour? We got that. How many hot slices? We got that as well. We got a lot more of those McRibby moments, too. The columnists contemplate the fake butter fad of the '90s, give a description of a flashlight that can withstand a deep fryer, and fondly recall the time KFC dressed up Colonel Sanders as a professional wrestler and had him dropkick a chicken. Okay, so this is a really silly zine. But it only costs a dollar. I dig it. And I'm not saying I'd eat the whole thing, but ah what the hell; if it's Friday, then well yeah, I'd give it a lick. –Jim Joyce (Deep Fried Zine MPLS, 2901 Yosemite Ave. South, St. Louis Park, MN 55416)

DONALD TRUMP (ALMOST) ATE MY BRAIN,
$4, 4¼" x 5½", offset, 20 pgs.
I know, I know—all orange turd all the time can be too much. Razorcake writer/Boston resident Kurt Morris knows this, too. Kurt's a writer concerned with mental health. This zine's focus is on inclusivity, on reminding everyone in despair that there are others in the same very large boat. He emphasizes that it's okay and natural to feel anguish in the wake of the election—and that it's okay to talk about it, to practice self care, to reach out. Kurt evokes community and kindness in the wake of disaster. –Michael T. Fournier (Pioneers Press, 100 E. Kansas Ave. #248, Lansing, KS 66043)

EARTH FIRST! WINTER 2016/2017, $6.50, 8" x 10½", 72 pgs.
Earth First! is a journal of ecological resistance. What was new this winter? Well, incarcerated presidential candidate Sean Swain used his column to concede Trump's win. But not so fast—Swain concedes only on the basis that he "knew [Trump] would make an even worse president" than himself. Is this "the end of swivilization" as we know it? We await Swain's thoughts this spring. Also included are unwincing looks at government abuse of activists at Standing Rock. And to even the scale, a pretty neat guide to sabotaging the type of heavy construction vehicles in that general vicinity. I bet everyone but me knows this, but sand in the gears is a big one. And bleach in the gas tank. Finally, we had the Oscars and the Grammys, now bring on the Wolves & Poodles awards. Earth First! gives Wolves to the brave and Poodles go to the bourgeoisie. Who won this issue? A Poodle went to Jill Stein for using Standing Rock as a photo-op, and Wolf went to the man who got schnookered, stole Walter Palmer's boat (dentist who shot a lion while on vacation) and wrecked it. An enlightening and entertaining read, even if you're not an anarchist. –Jim Joyce (Daily Planet Publishing, Earth First! Journal, PO Box 964, Lake Worth, FL 33460)

FLUKE #14, $5, 8½" x 11", copied, 44 pgs.
The previous issue of Matthew Thompson's zine—the twenty-fifth anniversary issue (!)—focused on his old hometown of Little Rock. So does this issue, but instead of telling stories from scene vets, Thompson shows us his history through assembling a collection of forty show flyers. This is a totally captivating approach, despite the fact that I only know a few of the local bands showcased here (Trusty, Chino Horde, Econochrist). Something resembling narrative forms as out-of-towners come through multiple times and locals move away. Awesome! –Michael T. Fournier (PO Box 1547, Phoenix, AZ 85001)

"It is for everyone feigning surprise every time a woman plugs in and plays well, gets behind the drums, or has the sickest bass style."

CAN YOU DEAL?

FUCK TRUMP CLUB #1,
$6 for six month subscription, 11" x 14", copied, 2 pgs.
This is a monthly newsletter detailing things related to Donald Trump's Presidency. I think it's mainly meant to keep people's spirits up and also to give information about Trump and his presidency. This issue gives some rules about dealing with a Trump presidency (courtesy of the *ABQ Free Press Weekly*) and gives a brief rundown of some of the members of Trump's cabinet. It's also a description of what to expect from the newsletter. It's an interesting idea for an interesting time. The possibilities are as limitless as the range of Trump's unfiltered ramblings. And nowadays I suppose we can use all the resistance we can get. –Kurt Morris (FTC, PO Box 30272, Albuquerque, NM 87190

LUCKY ROAD CAT #1, $7, 4" x 5", perfect bound mini-book, 50 pgs.
This pocket-sized zine from punk rocker of Plan-It-X Records and Ghost Mice fame, Chris Clavin, contains three short stories. One about loosely organizing a summer fun fest, with little to no plans but still being able to pull it off in the end. The second is about watching people cruise around in the summer—whether it be in low riders or pick up trucks—and one lonely redneck "Super Cruiser" who became an unlikely friend. The third and last short story is a classic band's tour tale, documenting many things that can go wrong, but showing how if you persevere and have a light-hearted attitude, you can take home some memories and some new lifelong friendships. –Tricia Ramos (Lucky Road Cat, Chris Clavin, c/o Secret Sailor Press, PO Box 2312, Bloomington, IN 47402, secretsailorpress@gmail.com)

MARCO POEMS, $6, 5½" x 8½", 24 pgs.
Marco Poems is a chapbook with eight pieces by Daniel Muro LaMere. All of the poems are about the life of Marco, a terminal punker from up north in Minneapolis. Marco's life is more or less a mess, but as the speaker says in the opening poem, "Our Marco is romantic all the same," just as we all must be when drinking cheap beer and taking public transit. LaMere's poetry illuminates the pains of aging in a lifestyle that, while exciting and high voltage at seventeen can sometimes leave a person lost and hurting in adulthood. And so our hero Marco gets around with ups and downs. On the up, "He left town with money that he'd earned / from sugar beets and paintings that he'd sold." But even getting away can come with a cost, and the story made from these poems does a cool job of articulating these dangers. Marco "knows so many kids who have hopped trains / but some, it must be said, are missing limbs." Marco Poems made me wonder what kind of world it would be if punks put out poetry books, like if there were a rule: you do an album, then you do a book. This collection definitely has an album feel to it—some drama, some choruses, and just the right balance of punch and electricity to keep me in until the end. –Jim Joyce (danielmurolamere.com, danielmurolamere@gmail.com)

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL #405, $4.99, 8½" x 11", 119 pgs.
I am not a regular reader of *Maximum Rocknroll* but I love it whenever I come across an issue at an independent bookstore or in my review box from Razorcake HQ. I always appreciate the way that *MRR* covers completely different bands than our own beloved zine. It always reminds that the punk scene is alive and well, even if it often seems to be spread thin around the world, like a people group in diaspora. The black and white images of full basements and community centers hosting rowdy punk shows, the photos of musicians covered in beer and sweat, and the different styles and forms that underground music takes are all presented here in the Bay Area-based newsprint punk zine. Issue #405 is MRR's "2016 Year-End Top Ten Lists" issue, and includes features on Glasgow's Anxiety and Minneapolis's Fucking. Be true to the 'cake, but definitely give *Maximum Rocknroll* a read. There is ample room and plenty of need for us all. Up the punks! –Jon Mule (Maximum Rocknroll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146)

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL: #407,
$4.99, 5½" x 8½", newsprint, 102 pgs.
Of course, most of the columns in here are about the Trump regime and intellectually or emotionally resisting fascism. Just about everybody wants to write about Trump and I'm fine with that. I was partial to Felix Havoc's column because he gives us historical examples of resistance to Nazis and the KKK. And, yes, *MRR,* condones punching Nazis. As usual, the columns that turn into talking about bands in a zine filled with interviews with bands and reviews of bands becomes painfully tedious, but I, otherwise, found a lot to like. This issue also has interviews with bands, a couple being Brazil's Futuro, Poland's Ohyda, and a Generacion Suicida tour diary. Per usual, it also has the insecure reviewer chomping at the bit to find something wrong with *Razorcake.* This time among other inaccurate and desperate jabs at stuff like the quality of our photographs, and not having enough columns (?), the woke reviewer calls out Art Fuentes for his comic with "liberal clichés about the 'progress of the last eight years,' neglecting to note the horrors that white supremacist capitalism has waged on most of the world for the past five hundred-plus years, up to and including the past eight." Kind of a lot to put in a four-panel comic isn't it? –Craven Rock (Maximum Rock'n'Roll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA, 94146, maximumrocknroll.com)

ONE SINGULAR DATE, 4" x 5", perfect bound, 46 pgs.
This is the story about a violent act that happened over a decade ago permanently changing a man's life forever. The title refers to the night it happened and how nothing has been the same after it. Ryan Fletcher was jumped by twelve people who beat him and left him for dead. He

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still deals with constant pain and his "brain only works the way (he'd) like it to part of the time." This zine is him attempting to speak about the incident, what happened surrounding it, and the fleeting support from his punk and activist communities to the severe PTSD he'd experienced out on the streets after dark. Over fifteen years ago, I survived a brutal attack by Nazi skinheads that left me not with constant pain, but permanent damage to my right eye. As I read, I nodded my head in sad empathy, understanding feelings of betrayal, paranoia, despair he describes. It's not easy to talk about your trauma or to deal with it. This is a brave zine and a story that needs to be listened to. –Craven Rock (Secret sailor Press, secretsailorpress.com)

OUT WHERE THE RIVER BROKE / THE FIRST FOUR YEARS,
$1, 5½" x 8½", copied, 14 pgs.
Two for the price of one! This double-sided zine features a small bit of writings from two different authors. The first side, *Out Where the River Broke,* is a tale of a man coming back to his hometown only to be shunned and (literally) kicked around by the locals; their residual feelings towards him the remnants of his reputation and past. A bleak bit of writing from Jeff Schroeck (of The Ergs!). Flipping the zine over, we have a chapter from Michael T. Fournier's forthcoming novel *Inferno Jones*. In the chapter, we meet a woman and follow her through opening her own restaurant, getting it to the point of security with a new business. When she finally hits that four-year mark and feels things are going good, then comes the twist. Right in the last sentence of the chapter. *The First Four Years* interested me right at the end of the sample, which I'm sure was intentional. I'll have to check out his novel to find out what happens next. –Tricia Ramos (Out Where The River Broke, jeffreyschroeck@gmail.com / The First Four Years, michaeltfournier@gmail.com)

OUT WHERE THE RIVER BROKE / THE FIRST FOUR YEARS,
$1, 5½" x 8½", copied, 14 pgs.
This zine is comprised of two stories: one from Jeff Schroeck and one from *Razorcake's* own Michael T. Fournier. Schroeck's tale is about a man who returns to a town in which he's not welcome, while Fournier's is an excerpt from his forthcoming book, *Inferno Jones.* In Fournier's case, the tale tells of a young woman starting a restaurant and the work she puts into it. I've heard it said by small-business experts that many small businesses die in the first five years, so it's interesting that Fournier explores the success of the woman's restaurant before hinting at the end of the excerpt that trouble is brewing. Schroeck's story is sad and he does a splendid job at building sympathy for Ray, the main character. I certainly would like to know more of Ray's story, both what happened before this short piece begins and what happens to him afterward. These are two strong, short stories that drew me in and made me want to read more. I can't ask for more than that. And for a buck, I recommend ordering it. –Kurt Morris (michaeltfournier@gmail.com)

PARANOIZE #42, Free, 5½" x 8½", 16 pgs.
Bobby Bergeron's Paranoize shares a brief New Orleans' scene report. Included are interviews with AR-15, Space Cadaver, Ekumen, and a few other swamp rockers. We also get the lowdown on good record stores—may I recommend Sisters of Christ?—and venues. Most of the zine covers thrash, metal, sludge, and hardcore. Seeing as this is gator country, I guess leaning toward harder stuff makes more sense. Ska and pop punk is too hot blooded. Anyhow, if that's your thing, and you know you're going to be in NOLA, I'd recommend emailing Bergeron for the lowdown and the latest issue of Paranoize. Before closing, I'd like to bump a band I learned of in the scene report, if only for their name: The Tomb Of Nick Cage. The group's songs are more or less synopses of horror movies. Long live Paranoize, herald of grime; long live Nicholas Cage, Pharaoh of New Orleans. –Jim Joyce (Paranoize, PO Box 2334, Marrero, LA 70073-2334, bobby@paranoizenola.com)

POPS (Parents on Parenting) #1, 5½" x 8½", copied, 40 pgs.
Parenting ramps up the emotions and raises a lot of existential questions, but it's also isolating in an odd way. You can't discuss adult concerns with your toddler, and the other parents that you meet tend to feel more like coworkers than friends. So, I found this zine very refreshing. In *POPs*, different parents share personal essays about unique experiences: becoming a parent in the house where your father died, how an autistic child's attachment to a pair of glasses can ease your self-image issues, and waiting for your stepkids to say, "You're not my real father!" It's very real, and very honest. I loved imagining each of these people taking a couple hours to write something after their kids went to bed. –Chris Terry (Jonas, PO Box 633, Chicago, IL 60690)

$PARE ¢HANGE #35, "Scroll If You're Heartless!"
$2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 32 pgs.
A poetry zine by Rev. Thomas L. Foote. I'm not much for poetry, so I gave the zine some side-eye before I read it. (And while I read it, too, as it turns out.) Sometimes I don't know if someone is taking artistic liberty with language and spelling things wrong on purpose, or if they're making a statement, or if they just ain't good at spellin'. I am happy to say that a few of the three-line haiku type poems were all right and the art that framed the poetry was generally cool. The highlight for me was the back cover, which shows a woman using a selfie stick in front of a mushroom cloud. –Cheyenne Neckmonster (PO Box 6023, Chattanooga, TN 37401)

Ryan Fletcher was jumped by twelve people who beat him and left him for dead.

–Craven Rock | ONE SINGULAR DATE

SUBTERRAIN MAGAZINE #75,
$8 Can. / $7 U.S., 8" x 11", magazine, 80 pgs.
subTerrain Magazine is a Canadian triannual literary magazine, showcasing new writers, poets, and talent. Each issue features a theme or writing prompt, with this issue's being "Nostalgia." The fiction pieces range from stories about childhood, tangible memories of smells and feelings, how it felt to be young, to friendships and relationships as a youth. The writings range from prose about animal legends, to touching and mournful poems, to commentary on technology, and how gaming can trigger fond nostalgic memories of growing up. Each page also features beautiful soft watercolor backgrounds, which complement the distant but clear emotion in each writing. There is also a great section of found photography from a family member's collection, and (what seem to be) regular book reviews in the very end of the magazine. Check out the "Submission Call" column near the back of the issue if you're interested in having your writing featured. The next theme is "The Future." –Tricia Ramos (subTerrain Magazine, PO Box 3008, Main Post Office, Vancouver, BC V6B 3X5 Canada, subterrain.ca)

UNVERIFIABLE COMICS #1, $2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 16 pgs.
One page political gag comics fill this zine. Crudely drawn and satirical, the comics range from "jokes" covering non-violence, Trump, conspiracy theories, human rights, and just general hot-button political issues. I get what the writer was going for, but it wasn't really my cup of tea. –Tricia Ramos (Unverifiable Comics, PO Box 345, Putney, VT 05346)

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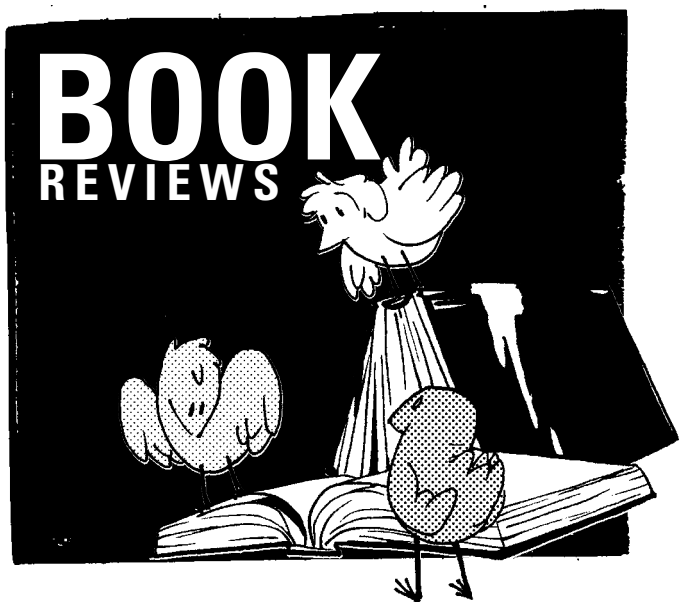


Cats I've Known
By Katie Haegle, 175 pgs.

I picked this volume out of the review pile because it was covered in cats. Each new story (all forty-three of them) has its own title page with an impressionistic little drawing of the cat in the story.

This book is a series of vignettes, told semi-chronologically, through (often incidental) encounters with various felines in and around the greater Philadelphia area. One of the first stories was just about a statue though, which made me suspicious… what's next? A cat-shaped cloud? A picture of a cat on a bag of kibbles? A family of balloon animals? None of these fears were realized, however, which is to the book's credit.

About halfway through the book, there's a really touching story about Trixie—the cat that Haegle owned for years—and she does a good job of capturing the bond that can form between humans and animals. It is the longest story (which clocks in at a whopping twelve pages), so if you are easily distracted, this book will suit your attention span. Many of the stories are two or three pages long.

The book is structured as a series of stories about cats the author has known (hence the title), but it's really more about the narrator than her feline companions. Many of the stories are a bit lackluster if you were hoping to get to know the cats in the stories very much, beyond a basic physical description. This seemed odd to me, because I could definitely tell some long-ass stories about cats *I've* known. Cats are weird and funny once you get to know them, but the everyday "I saw a cat on my walk home from work" story is not a very compelling one.

If you're looking for a book loaded with micro-memoirs that use various cats as a motif throughout, this is one to curl up with. Haegle clearly wanted to share her love of cats in this book, and though it's a valiant effort, it was far from purr-fect. –Cheyenne Neckmonster (Microcosm Publishing, 2752 N Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227)

Mercy of the Tide, The
By Keith Rosson, 283pgs.

I've said it before… Razorcake: where the people you admire most are also your friends. Keith's writing has been in most issues of *Razorcake*. He's one of my favorite record reviewers. We've read our short stories together. I've been a fan of Keith the writer and Keith the human being for years. Yet nothing had prepared me for how exceptional his debut novel would be or how much it would affect me.

The setting is a small coastal Oregon town in 1983. It's best to not go into plot details. It's a book that's best read with fresh eyes. However, I will say this is a book about grief. There is a momentum to the novel which utilizes the subdued hysteria that constitutes living with grief. The little ruptures in sanity and the wake they produce through the mundane tasks of getting through a day. The crippling awareness of personal faults and their interwoveness in the lives and wellbeing of others which mourning produces. It also stands out in its treatment of children and of disability (one primary character is a young deaf girl). There is no condescension or belittling of kids' experience. Equally, there's no false sense of heroism or tragedy in disability. Instead, you find a portrait of a child that could only have been made by someone who has spent time with children and learned from them, who understands that children can be fiercely intelligent, and that disability is a feature and not a singular definition of their experience. And that portrait is emblematic of the rest of the characters.

The Mercy of the Tide is at once familiar and disorientating. The familiarity comes from the setting and the suspense: something strange is afoot in a small town where anything but small characters find themselves pitted against both the numinous and earthly forces of evil and human fallibility. What's disorientating is Keith's infusion of class consciousness and unmitigated compassion into the familiar. This infusion is accomplished without a soapbox or heavy-handed moralizing. In fact, it really doesn't have anything to do with the novel's premise, but is inseparable from my enjoyment. The infusion is there because that's how Keith experiences and sees the world. It's not a matter of authenticity; things can be "real" and also shitty. Rather, the characters and the world they inhabit express what's important to me with a sensitivity and subtlety that's rare. And that's what novels should do: allow us to slow down and highlight the foundational elements of our lives which go unsung, misinterpreted, or simplified. *The Mercy of the Tide* is intense and beautiful, epically sad yet restorative like all great novels are. Affirmation in every sense of the term. Highly recommended. —Matthew Hart (Meerkat Press, meerkatpress.com)

That's what novels should do: allow us to slow down and highlight the foundational elements of our lives which go unsung, misinterpreted, or simplified.

–Matthew Hart | *The Mercy of the Tide*

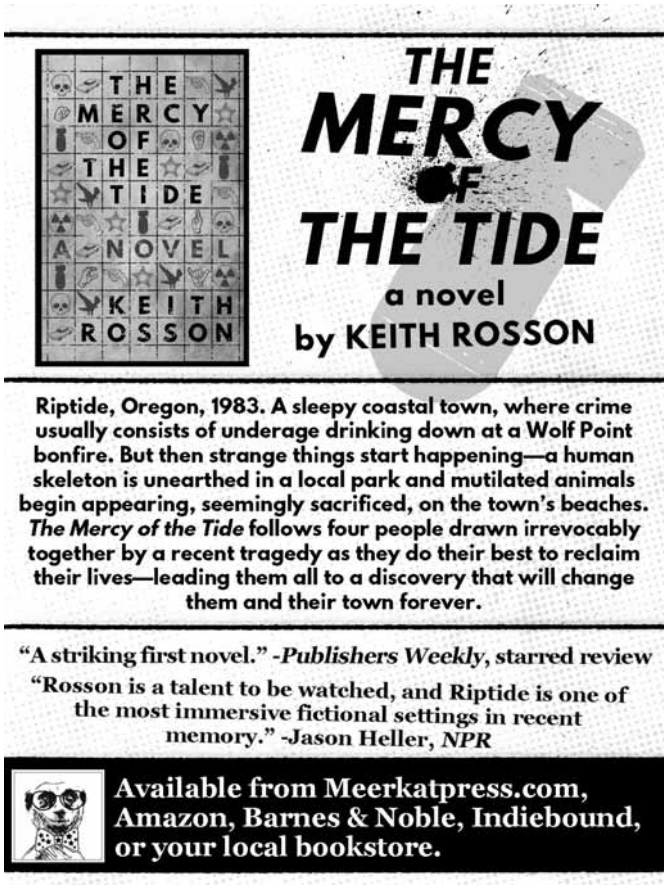
Mercy of the Tide, The
By Keith Rosson, 283 pgs.

Full disclosure: Author Keith Rosson is a contributor to *Razorcake,* although I've never met him. But over the years I've gotten the impression he's a good dude. One thing I know for sure about him, though, is that he's a talented writer. On many occasions as I read his debut novel, *The Mercy of the Tide,* I thought to myself, "Damn, Keith can write!"

Rosson's debut novel deals with strange occurrences in a small, oceanside town in Oregon in 1983. Mutilated animals begin appearing, as does a human skeleton. There's a sense of mystery throughout the book, but it's also suspenseful and dramatic. There are issues of death, family relationships, and love woven with intricacy throughout these pages.

Each chapter exists through the eyes of one of four characters. Sam Finster is an eighteen-year-old high school senior who lives with his deaf nine-year-old sister Trina. Besides the two Finsters there are two members of law enforcement: Dave Dobbs, the town's sheriff, and Nick Hayslip, his deputy. It's obvious that each character is coming from the same writer, but they're also not interchangeable. Rosson gives them unique personality traits and behaviors, making Trina, Sam, Dave, and Nick all interesting in their own right.

The world in which the story takes place is like our own history of the 1980s, but different. Ronald Reagan is president but he's also had an assassination attempt that was unlike the one he had in our world. Additionally, tensions with the Soviet Union seem much higher. There are some elements of fantasy that come into play, which means *The Mercy of the Tide* is not delineated. Rosson's


THE MERCY OF THE TIDE A NOVEL KEITH ROSSON
THE MERCY OF THE TIDE
a novel
by KEITH ROSSON
Riptide, Oregon, 1983. A sleepy coastal town, where crime usually consists of underage drinking down at a Wolf Point bonfire. But then strange things start happening—a human skeleton is unearthed in a local park and mutilated animals begin appearing, seemingly sacrificed, on the town's beaches. The Mercy of the Tide follows four people drawn irrevocably together by a recent tragedy as they do their best to reclaim their lives—leading them all to a discovery that will change them and their town forever.
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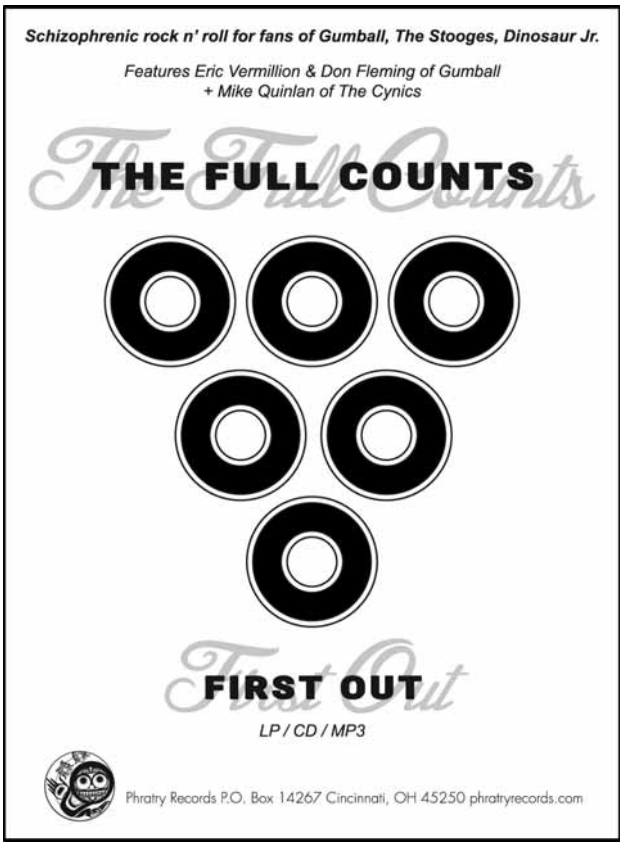
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talent shows in his ability to thread four main characters in such a seamless manner into a book that includes more than one genre.

One nagging complaint throughout, though, is Rosson's ability to tell such a descriptive tale meant that he has an ability to be too verbose. It would've been good for him to reign in some description, especially earlier in the book. It took me a while to get engaged because of the extensive picture painted. Even so, I'm glad I stuck with it, because the final quarter of the book more than pays off.

The world of publishing is strange. It's kind of like music in the sense of I don't know why some albums get popular acclaim and others fall through the cracks. I've read books that are "successful" and they're lost on me. Meanwhile, people like Rosson are putting out gripping, illustrative books like *The Mercy of the Tide.* God damn, if this isn't made into a movie it's a crying shame. –Kurt Morris (Meerkat Press, meerkatpress.com)

There is something to be said for seeing how areas that aren't metropolitan hubs can also spawn cultural movements, even if only for a finite time.

–Adrian Salas | *This Road Leads to Nowhere: Pierre Punk*

People's Police, The
By Norman Spinrad, 284 pgs.

The People's Police. Can it possibly live up to its title? It can.

It's set in an alternate—but not *too* alternate—New Orleans. Regular hurricanes have resulted in a swampland segregation that's sort of like if the National Guard's orders in New Orleans immediately following Katrina had evolved into municipal policy.

The story is told in a Southern tradition—more telling than showing, but with infectious energy—and includes cops and whorehouse owners and an influential white-girl voodoo queen and corruption and an election. The word "gumbo" is pressing itself on me, so sure, it's a gumbo prepared by a master chef.

The voodoo queen is genuinely visited by spirits, so the book is fantasy fiction, but it's also hard science fiction, and the science in question is economics. (Economics isn't *really* a science, of course.) *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* website quotes Allen Steele: "Hard SF is the form of imaginative literature that uses either established or carefully extrapolated science as its backbone." In *The People's Police*, Spinrad carefully extrapolates from the financial collapse of 2008 and imagines the Great Deflation and its effects.

How is it that some science fiction is read only by science fiction fans, and some comes to be known by a wider audience? After reading *The People's Police*, I have to think it's a question of editing. *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Neuromancer* had the same editor, Terry Carr. Readers who tend not to read science fiction have either read them or know something about them. Spinrad is under-known in America (after something like five decades), and—perhaps not coincidentally—he publishes passages like this:

"People always hate the cops until they need them because all we are otherwise is a pain in their asses, givin 'em tickets, busting them for dope, or pimping, or their latest armed robbery, what's to like when you meet a cop enforcing the law on you? ..."

That's a cop explaining to another cop something that he somehow doesn't already know, and it goes on for a while longer. Any literary editor would have axed it, along with Spinrad's repeatedly using "not exactly" ironically—"… I did not exactly discourage them from quenching their thirsts …", "… [it] did not exactly seem a hard way to go along …" I stopped counting after five of those.

It's a rude, bustling, idea-filled novel—the kind of fiction that politically engaged people read back when TV was unwatchable (except for *Columbo*)—and I have to pay Spinrad what might be the highest compliment one can give a writer: reading his book made me miss a bus stop. –Jim Woster (Tor Books, tor-forge.com)

Punk Avenue
By Phil Marcade, 246 pgs.

Although largely unknown to most punker types, Phil Marcade was one of the many folks at ground zero of the initial N.Y. punk wave, active as a musician in the group The Senders and as a scenester schmoozing with others a bit more well known. Perhaps his most overt contribution to punk history is as the guy who provided Blondie with translation assistance for the lyrical content of "Denis." Starting with a drug bust not long after he lands in America, the book careens through his years neck deep in that formative scene: hanging out and performing at Max's and CBGB; the growth of the scene around those two venues; his friendship and occasional musical partnership with New York Dolls guitarist Johnny Thunders; the ups and downs of being in band; assorted tales of nights spent drinking, drugging, and crawling around in rock's hedonistic subterranean heyday. It ends nearly a decade later at the point where "the life" and its excesses have exacted a heavy toll on his band and himself.

This could've easily devolved into another vapid, "I drank/fucked/fought/know such-and-such, aren't I fuggin' cool?" memoir with little of the author's own merit in evidence. Marcade largely avoids those trappings here, deftly focusing on how he fits into the stories he recounts. He is actively involved rather than mere passive viewer, and appears keenly aware of punk's egalitarian ethos despite his heavy roster of "name" pals. His is an interesting story and he tells it with a voice that is very conversational; vibrant but not bogged down by obvious literary blathering. This renders the book a quick, engaging read. It is chock full of great anecdotes and tales of shenanigans while also adding some color and flavor to a scene that too often suffers anymore from over-analyzation and the icy, sterilizing eye of academia. His is a living, breathing world where those "names" are real people doing real people shit, good and bad, and he is one of them. –Jimmy Alvarado (Three Rooms Press, 561 Hudson St., NY, NY 10014)

This Road Leads to Nowhere: Pierre Punk
Edited by Josh Garrett-Davis, 254 pgs.

It seems we are now in a time when the historizing of punk has picked up full steam, and—forty years in—readers are no longer relegated to the hegemony of the big four punk cities on the bookshelf (London, New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles). With a population of around 14,000 (according to Wikipedia as of this writing) Pierre, South Dakota is nowhere near the top of the urban food chain, yet this book is a testament to the fact that, with some committed individuals in the community, a thriving punk scene was present even in the wide expanses of South Dakota.

The book is structured as a type of oral history which constructs its narrative drive through interviews, essays, and remembrances of various people involved with the Pierre scene. The book does have a bit of a shaky start, as most of the front pages are an assemblage of ephemera like photos, fliers, and poems. It initially reads like some kind of extremely niche art book on South Dakota. After an essay by James P. Leary—which traces the area's punk roots back past Midwest garage rockers and all the way to an apparently thriving "polkabilly" movement in the 1920s—the book truly takes shape. It follows the evolution of Pierre's punk movement from its embryonic stages in the late '80s up until almost present day.

There are ups and downs, largely dependent on the perseverance of one or two individuals at any one time who keep on top of planning and booking whatever venue is available at the time. The story of the various halls, community centers, and converted spaces that host the shows are also the story of just how much Pierre's punks could thrive. The town goes from spawning its two "all star" bands—hardcore thrashers Diseased and pop punks Stickman—to hosting larger touring punk bands like From Ashes Rise, Japanther, and Off With Their Heads. The story of Pierre is not all feel-good triumph over adversity though, as much of what is described in the book takes place against an epidemic of suicides among the town's youth population. I come from a town in New Mexico that's slightly smaller than Pierre, so there is something to be said for seeing how areas that aren't metropolitan hubs can also spawn cultural movements, even if only for a finite time. –Adrian Salas (Co-published by M12 Collective, 350 West Front St., Byers, CO 80103, m12studio.org / Last Chance Press, lastchancepress.org)

Dr. Harper begins with the most common source of mindfuckery: trauma. (The brain isn't inherently a vindictive dick, it's simply trying to cope.)

–Sean Arenas | ***Unfuck Your Brain: Using Science to Get Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-outs, and Triggers***

Unfuck Your Brain: Using Science to Get Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-outs, and Triggers
By Dr. Faith G. Harper, 190 pgs.

Right out of the gate, I'm hooked on Dr. Faith G. Harper's informal writing style and down-to-earth, DIY solutions to overwhelming brain snafus. She sums up her radical mental health philosophy when she writes, "This book is for the people who are fucking tired of hearing or thinking that they are just crazy." Fuck yeah, Dr. Harper!

In regards to mental health, many us are frequently gaslit. We're told by people who claim to love us, "Your problems aren't as big as you think," "You would be fine if you would just get over it," and "You're the crazy one, not the manipulative, toxic folks putting you through the wringer." Dr. Harper debunks this nonsense and empowers the individual by simply providing the desperately needed facts and science—"not complex, dry, boring-as-a-box-rocks science"—to handle our shit.

Dr. Harper begins with the most common source of mindfuckery: trauma. She outlines the science behind traumatic responses (the brain isn't inherently a vindictive dick, it's simply trying to cope) and lays out a clear plan of attack, so you can control trauma and not let it control you. For example, the correlation between physical health and mental heath is often deemphasized, but as she points out, a healthy body is a healthier brain. Furthermore, the brain, although a stubborn bastard at times, can be retrained with grounding techniques and a whole lot of determination.

For Dr. Harper, it comes down to locating the origin of the problem, not merely treating the symptoms. Makes sense. She argues, in her own profanity-laden way, that by treating the source and understanding triggers, one can get their brain back on track and alleviate the big, bad nasties: anxiety, depression, PTSD, anger, addiction, and grief. But if I gleaned one thing from this book, it's this: "[Y]our experiences and reactions are valid and real and you are worthy of care and the opportunity to heal." Words to live by. Trust me, buy this book for yourself *and* for a loved one. –Sean Arenas (Microcosm, $15, microcosmpublishing.com)

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